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*MAJOR CORNELIUS.*



ABOUT thirty years ago I was clerk in a lawyer's office, on a very small income, and unmarried. I then lodged in Ebury Street, Belgravia, in a lodging and boarding house kept by an eminently respectable old maid, Miss Jones, who treated all her boarders with consideration, and did not exact from them more than they were able to pay. We dined at her house only on Sundays and on Christmas Day—that is, unless invited out. The dinner was always early—at one o'clock—and always followed the same order. On the first Sunday in the month we had chicken and

bacon; on the second, boiled beef, garnished with carrots and turnips (alternating with parsnips), and suet pudding; on the third Sunday we had roast mutton and fried potatoes; on the fourth, roast beef and mashed or boiled potatoes. When there were five Sundays in a month, the additional Sunday was supplied with beef-steak pudding, three pounds of beef to a pudding.

I do not know how it was that the boiled potatoes at Miss Jones's always tasted of dish-clout. I know very well that potatoes are not boiled in a cloth; nevertheless the pudding,

which is, did not taste of the clout, and the potatoes did. There are several insoluble mysteries encountered in life—this was one.

Our landlady was tall, pale, sandy-haired. She lived *en déshabille* in the kitchen all the morning; but at 9 A.M. at breakfast, and at 4 P.M., when we boarders dropped in from our work, she was prim, laced, curled, and stately. How she managed to become so in a few minutes, I never knew. That also was one of the insoluble mysteries of life.

When one of us stayed at home indisposed, we found that by 9.30 A.M. she was what we called in our slang 'dish-shovelled:' not a curl in place, a smirch across her cheek, and her neat merino gown replaced by a ragged dress not fit for a lady to wear.

Miss Jones was the ideal maiden-lady of propriety, dignity, and thrift. She was good-natured; on one point, however, she was inexorable—she never allowed her lodgers to fall into debt; we paid weekly, beforehand, one pound per head. She had an affable smile, and similar remarks on the weather for all her boarders. Each had a rasher of bacon of the same size at breakfast, and two lumps of sugar in his tea, and one spoonful of brown sugar in his coffee. Each, also, had an egg, and all the eggs tasted of limewater or sawdust alike.

All the boarders were males except one, an old lady with a false front, who combed her back hair with an antimoniacal comb to blacken it, and this always made her collar grimy. She wore also a set of false teeth; both jaws were thus furnished—how contrived we never quite made out. That also remains one of the insoluble mysteries of life. They were somehow contrived to fit with springs, and were so badly contrived that in eating she did not look her best, and sometimes presented a very unattractive spectacle indeed. The old lady did not like us, and we did not like her. She often had devilled kidneys for breakfast, we never, but she paid extra for them; and when she had them, then inevitably the teeth went out of gear. Behind her back we were accustomed to mimic her; she knew it by some extraordinary intuition, mysterious to us for a long time, till we discovered that the maid-of-all-work had sneaked to her of what we said and did. She scarcely spoke to us at meals, except in a peremptory way, to have the mustard or toast passed to her. We took a malicious pleasure in neglecting to anticipate her wants, and force her to demand the butter or toast, &c., and not to hear her requests to have them passed,

till she raised her voice angrily and repeated them very loudly, when we immediately began to serve her with mustard, pepper, egg-spoons, empty sardine tins, any and every thing, with mock eagerness to forestall her little wants. We were rude to the old lady, I admit, but she was very aggravating. However, my story has nothing to do with her, so I may dismiss her; it concerns an old gentleman who was our co-lodger and boarder at Miss Jones's pension. He was Major Cornelius, a thin, grey-haired man, with a refined face, and the most delicately cut nostrils I think I ever saw. He was closely shaven. He was scrupulously careful about his clothes, and, though they were old and threadbare, no one could doubt that he was a gentleman by birth, breeding, and in feeling. There was something very sweet and prepossessing about his face. It was pale and grave, but a kindly smile lurked about the delicate mouth, and the grey eyes were soft. He was rather lame, from a wound he had received at Waterloo. He had his pension, and he lived on that; he had nothing besides to live on. That, however, would have sufficed to keep him in comfort had he not in an evil hour stood security for a younger brother. We none of us knew the circumstances exactly, and I cannot now say what was truth and what was conjecture in the story whispered among us. My impression is that the brother, to whom he was devotedly attached, had not behaved honourably; he had left the country, and the Major's resources were strained to the utmost to meet the demand that came on him as security. We none of us ventured to allude to this topic; the disgrace rankled in the old man's heart; there was an ever-open wound there, which we were careful not to touch.

There was a childlike simplicity in the old man which rather amused us youngsters then; now, looking back on him, I find it was infinitely touching. We, however, laughed over it—we knew much more of the world than he. To Miss Jones and to the old lady with the teeth he was courteous, with an old-fashioned courtesy that flattered them and won their hearts. He paid Miss Jones the same as we, one pound per week, but he dined daily at home. We used to say that Miss Jones set her cap at the Major, and that she only allowed him to remain on these moderate terms because she desired to become Mrs. Cornelius. I do not believe it was so. I think she strained a point so as to retain an old Waterloo officer in her house, to give it an air of superiority above other boarding-houses in the street.

Whenever I think of Major Cornelius I remember his hair. I have already said it was thin; it was always elaborately brushed and watered, the hair drawn forward from behind the ear, and turned in a sort of curl over the temple. His collars were always clean and very stiff, and his black cravat tight about his throat.

A kind old man! When Robbins was ill with rheumatic fever, he sat up with him night after night, and ministered to him as a nurse. When Robbins was better, and able to receive our call, he sat up in his bed, leaning on the Major, who had his arm round him, and smiled and looked as pleased with our congratulations as though that vulgar Robbins had been his own son.

A kind old man! He allowed us youngsters to poke little harmless jokes at him. We called him the Centurion. When an Italian band stayed playing in Ebury Street, we would tell him his proper place was to lead it. On Sundays, when he arrived for dinner, one of us would ask, 'Been to church, Major?' Then Robbins or another would answer, 'Of course he has. What is the good of asking? Does not Scripture tell us that Cornelius was a *devout* centurion?' These little exhibitions of feeble fun he bore with great good-humour, but we instinctively felt that there was a limit we must not transgress. The only man among us, coarse in perception, who could not recognise this was Robbins. When he pushed his buffoonery too far, the Major would rise, bow, and leave the room. Then the rest of us fell upon, sat upon, and flattened out Robbins.

The Major dined daily with Miss Jones at the lodging-house. We never knew of what that week-day dinner consisted, but we believed it was made out of the remains of the great Sunday feast. After chicken Sunday the fare must have been poor. After beef and mutton Sundays, the meat no doubt was minced, and overlaid with a blanket of potato as cottage pudding—much potato and little mince; or was served as haricot with carrot and large sippets of toast; or was lost in batter and called toad-in-a-hole; or buried in boiled dough. We did not know, we only guessed. No information could be extracted from the Major when we inquired after the 'cold remains,' or the 'venerable relics,' or 'Duke Humphrey's dinner.' He would answer gently, without a smile, 'I assure you Miss Jones and I have fared sumptuously.' The old man practised the severest economy. He denied himself everything he could; he drank only water at dinner and supper.



Each of us had his separate jug; one had stout, another pale ale, another bitter beer; Robbins drank brandy-and-water; the old lady Marsala. Ale meant to the Major fourpence a day, or two-and-fourpence a week, that is, over six pounds per annum, and the six pounds was needed for necessaries. His boots were to him a constant source of uneasiness, care, and alarm. Boots come expensive, and go quickly. The same pair was soled and re-soled, till the crease over the toe on the outside roughened, then parted. Still they encased his feet. A little blackened grease filled the split, some sticking-plaster disguised it and was polished over; but these were expedients postponing the evil day, nothing more. That the Major pinched and screwed to raise the money for a new pair we all knew, and we all noticed the tenderness with which the new boots were regarded, how they were spared work, kept indoors when the streets were muddy and the rain fell.

The long slender fingers—they were nearly transparent—were wonderfully skilful with the needle. The Major repaired his own garments; we believed that he mended his own stockings. The maid told us his darning was beautiful. One day that Robbins stayed at home with a cold, he heard the Major ask the maid-of-all-work very kindly to let him have a hot flat-iron in his room. Next Sunday he appeared in brilliant—well, clothes, and we found he had turned an old pair himself; we noticed that they bulged *in*, instead of out, at the knee for some weeks, till they accommodated themselves to their altered situation.

If Major Cornelius was self-denying in the matter of drink and clothing, it was not that he could not appreciate generous liquor, and was not particular about dress. On the contrary, he was a good judge of wines, and he was fastidious about garments. I am sure that nothing galled his self-esteem more than to have to dress shabbily. He did as much of his own washing as he well could with a can of boiling water in his own basin. Washing is a heavy item in expenditure in London. I believe that some of the Major's garments were so thin, threadbare, and patched, that he was ashamed to send them to the wash, lest they should be commented on, and that therefore he did his best with them at home.

His bedroom was high up, in the attic. He paid less than we, and was therefore obliged to put up with inferior accommodation. In winter he suffered much, I fear, from want of fire. The parlour fire was not lighted till 4 P.M., so that it was begin-

ning reluctantly to burn up when the clerks returned from their offices. In his own room, under the slates, it was cold; nevertheless he sat there when the bed was made, that is, from about noon to four. Before that he remained in the parlour, watching the expiring of the little fire lit for show, not warmth, during breakfast. Only in the coldest weather would he descend to the kitchen for a few moments, to stand by the stove and warm his hands, whilst Miss Jones, 'dish-shovelled,' hid in the pantry. If the day were frosty he walked out, to put his blood in circulation, and then his cheeks warmed into colour—a bright colour in his clear skin like the roses in a child.

That old cat with the teeth and the false front and the dirty collar rented the first floor, and had her own sitting-room, and a fire there; but, from motives of delicacy, no doubt, and for fear of establishing a precedent, never invited the Major to it.

He was so modest that it was only casually we learned that he had once moved in the best circles, and had acquaintances high in military positions and titled. He visited and was visited by none of them. Since that affair of his brother he had withdrawn himself from his fellows; he shrank from meeting those who knew the circumstances, and he suspected more of being aware of them than really did know. He was very proud—not haughty, understand—but with a sense of his honour and breeding which made him reserved.

One luxury he would not give up, the luxury of giving gratuities to all who served him. I believe that the half-crowns as 'vales' to the footmen who took his greatcoat, hat, and gloves had much to do with his refusing the invitations he at one time received weekly from old brother officers and friends. He could not be mean, and to avoid the wound to his self-respect of seeming mean he would not go to his fellows. At last invitations, always declined, ceased to come in.

The winter of 1852 was cold. On November 18 the Duke of Wellington was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, with great display of military pomp. Our old friend was one of the veterans who walked in the procession. That winter saw the fall of the Conservative Ministry under Lord Derby, and the fall of something much more important—at least to us, in Miss Jones's establishment—the falling to pieces of the Major's greatcoat. We had followed the progress of decay in that venerable article of clothing for some time with interest, and we had wondered what the Major would do

when it was worn completely out. We hoped it would hold out the winter. It did not; it fell to pieces with the Derby Ministry.

The old man's face grew long; he fell into depression; no joke stirred him, no news interested him. It was obvious to all that his mind was engrossed with one absorbing question, how to provide himself with another greatcoat.

Then we residents under the roof of Miss Jones took counsel together, and discussed the possibility of providing him with one. Should we subscribe the requisite sum?—that is, amongst ourselves. We were none of us well off, but we were ready to make a sacrifice to help the old man to a new coat. As for that woman on the first floor with the teeth, we did not consult her—selfish beast! she ate her two kidneys herself and never offered a bite to the Major.

Although we would gladly have found the money, yet we felt that the plan was not feasible. The Major was sensitive on the subject of his poverty, and the offer would offend his pride. We must help him some other way. Then I suggested that the Major should be induced to write his reminiscences of Waterloo, and that his MS. should be sent to a magazine. Thus the money might be made by himself. He was far too humble a man to think of this expedient unprompted. We formed a deputation and waited on him, and entreated him, as a favour to ourselves, that he would put on paper his recollections of the Great Duke, and of Lord Uxbridge, of Picton, and of the battle, and then, that he would give his production to the world. He was frightened at the suggestion, and demurred to it. He had never written a line that had been printed, he knew nothing of literary form, he remembered nothing of real importance. We overruled his objections; we recalled one incident and anecdote after another with which we had been favoured. We told him that we could not expect to be all our lives in Miss Jones's boarding-house, and that in our after-life we wished to possess a memorial of one whom we valued, and loved, and revered as a father.

The old man's eyes filled when we said this, he could not answer us; his mouth twitched, he held out his hand, and it shook as he squeezed each of ours in turn.

'Besides,' said I, 'I am an engrossing clerk, so shall be able to give literary character to the Recollections, and write them in a legible hand, which goes, I understand, a long way with the reader to a publisher.'

Now whilst the composition of this literary venture was in progress the weather turned bitterly cold, and the Major caught a chill and coughed much. It was high time for him to provide himself with a greatcoat. He felt as though a cold hand were laid on his back between the shoulders, numbing him—in fact, the greatcoat had parted at the seam in the rear.



He overhauled the old garment, to see whether it would be possible for him to repair it himself. He tried the parted seam, but the threads would not hold, they frayed the edges. No! only a professional could, so to speak, set the greatcoat on its legs again. Then he took it to a Mr. Dawkins, a small working tailor, who lived in a side lane; a man much given to brandy, who

got drunk of a Sunday as a matter of course. On Monday he was dismal, his head ached, his hand shook, his views of life were socialistic. On Mondays he was unaccommodating to his customers, whether in the matter of price or of repairs. The Major was not a man of the world or he would not have gone to Mr. Dawkins on Monday. On Sunday he had come to the conclusion that something must be done to his greatcoat or he would not be able to go to church again, and on Monday morning, accordingly, he turned into Little Back Street, and into the tailor's shop. He was at once almost stifled with the closeness of the room, the smell of damp cloth, hot irons, and stale smoke. Mr. Dawkins sat on his table, his legs crossed, and without his shoes, his feet encased in not over-clean white stockings. With his toes he grasped the leg of a pair of trousers which he was reseating. Mr. Dawkins was a pasty-faced, small-pox-marked man, with thick black hair and a black, frowsy chin. His thumb-nail resembled the back of a tortoise. Round his neck, over his dirty grey waistcoat, hung a skein of black thread.

He had been engaged for some minutes in trying to thread his needle when the Major entered. He had cursed the bad light, the needle's eye, the thread, and his wife in the back room, because his hand shook so that he could not thread the needle.

Major Cornelius soon saw that the time he had chosen was injudicious, but it was too late for him to withdraw. He knew the tailor, and the tailor knew him. Indeed the man did many little jobs for the gentlemen at Miss Jones's. Mr. Dawkins's eye at once recognised the customer, and then travelled down to his arm to see what hung over it for him to operate upon.

'How are you this morning, Mr. Dawkins?'

'Not at all well. Out of sorts all over. How can a man be well when he slaves all day and is worried all night by a teething baby? Squall, squall, squall! Look at my hand how it shakes. I am unnerved by that odious brat. I wish it were not against the law to drown babies. Mine would soon go over Waterloo Bridge.'

'How can you, Robert?' exclaimed his wife, looking into the room.

'Go back to your work. I was not speaking to you,' ordered the tailor. 'I don't know what sort of work you have for me to do, Major, but I tell you beforehand I can only boggle it with this shaking hand. Till the baby's teeth are cut no work worth looking at comes out of this shop. Well, Major, what is it?'

'I've come to—to—just—indeed—really—with——.' When the Major was nervous his eloquence forsook him, he expressed himself in adverbs and prepositions, and left the imagination to supply the verbs and substantives. He stood still, stuttering, thinking he had said his say, or forgetting what his purpose was.

'Well, sir! what do you want with me?' asked Dawkins, casting a scrutinising glance at Major Cornelius, and examining every garment he wore with the eye of a critic, remorseless over defects. He looked for rent, hole, lost button, frayed sleeve, whitened elbow, worn trouser-foot, burst-out button-hole.

'The—the—greatcoat. I—that is—it—if—with—by any means—you see it is—well nearly—just a little the worse for wear, but otherwise good—no, not new—between the shoulders—yes, I see—at the elbow also—the collar, you observe—and the lappets—the tail, I think—with a little——'

Mr. Dawkins took the greatcoat and spread it over his knees.

'It is not quite new,' said the Major apologetically. 'It is not, indeed, at all new; but, I think, with your admirable skill it may be given another lease of life, say ten years more service. It has been an old and excellent garment, has kept me snug, and screened me from many a chill. I have become attached to the coat, and do not wish to abandon it.'

Dawkins said nothing, but his face assumed a sarcastic expression the Major did not like. Then he shook his head, raised the coat and held it before the window. The light revealed all its imperfections with cruel directness, it streamed through the rents, it struggled through the threadbare tracts. Then he turned the greatcoat on one side, and explored the right sleeve, and shook his head. Then he turned it over on the other side, and studied the left sleeve; then he shook his head again. Next he turned the pockets inside out; then he went over the collar, and broke into a short laugh. Then he examined the lining and shook the coat, and threw it contemptuously on the table at his feet.

'No good—but for the ragman.'

Major Cornelius turned deadly white. The room swam round with him, the floor heaved and fell, as though it were the cabin of a transport in the Bay of Biscay. He who would have marched fearless to the mouth of a cannon, shook in his shoes before Mr. Dawkins.

'I think, Mr. Dawkins, you are mistaken. A bit of cloth put behind that angular tear, and a strip where the seam has

parted, would make the old coat hold for some time longer; and if the cloth be thin, some lining and wadding, which are inexpensive, would supply the requisite warmth. The thing is feasible if you will give your valuable time and thought to it.'

'Not possible. The cloth is utterly worn out. It will not bear a thread; look here!' he began to rip. The Major uttered a cry—the only cry he had uttered since he was a baby. 'In pity! Mr. Dawkins! Do not deal so roughly with my coat.'

'Nothing can be done with it. Take it to the ragshop.'

'I have heard that cloth can be patched by placing a piece behind the rent, and a thin bit of gutta-percha, like goldbeater's skin, between it and the cloth of the garment, then when a hot iron is passed over the surface the gutta-percha dissolves into an adhesive substance gumming the two pieces together, and not a thread is used.'

'No good. No good at all. Cloth is cloth, and this is worn to the last fibre.'

'I only want it to hold out the winter. I am old. I may not live to see another year. It would be a pity to buy a new greatcoat when I may not be able to enjoy it many years. I do not care to squander money, and it would be squandering—should I not live long to wear the coat.'

'No,' said Dawkins shortly; 'dispose of it to the ragman. I won't have anything to do with it. You must have a new greatcoat.'

'A *new* greatcoat!'

'Yes, a new one.'

'Humph! a greatcoat costs money.'

'Of course. Greatcoats are not given away.'

'They cost a great deal of money.'

'To be sure, a great deal.' On Mondays Mr. Dawkins loved to put matters in a harsh light before his customers, to stagger and throw them back into attitudes of despair before the mighty expense in which clothing would involve them. He looked complacently at the Major, and drank in his misery.

'Suppose now,' said Major Cornelius, nervously, 'I was to—that is—but really—I doubt.'

'Do you mean, what would be the cost of a new greatcoat?'

'Well—yes.'

'That would depend on the quality of the cloth.'

'I should not need the best and finest material, it would be



unnecessary for an old man. One that would last my day would suffice. I should not wish to plunge into lavish expenditure.'

'About four guineas.'

'Four guineas!—Lord bless me!—did you say four guineas?'

'Not one penny less.'

'Four guineas! Good heavens! Where am I?—that is——'

'You must have substantial broadcloth—none of your shoddy, one quarter staple, the rest devil's dust, that goes glossy at the seams and elbows in six months. Waste of money getting that. Not fit for a gentleman. Always looks shabby.'

'Mr. Dawkins,' exclaimed the Major, and the beads of sweat came out upon his brow, 'I entreat you to apply yourself to my old coat, and see if you cannot make it last out this winter. We are now at the close of January. There are only two more months of really cold weather before us. Make the coat last over them. During the spring and summer when there is rain I will not go out. Before next winter I shall have had time to think about a new greatcoat. This comes on me so suddenly, so bewilderingly, that—that——'

'Impossible. I don't choose to throw time and thread away.'

Major Cornelius heaved a deep sigh, took the despised greatcoat, threw it over his arm, and left the tailor's shop and lane. He went along like a sleep-walker, purposeless, anywhere.

'What a predicament!' said he to himself; 'I could not have believed it had I been told that the grand old coat was to serve me no more. Poor old thing! it was with me in my better days. My brother—my poor, dear, misguided brother!—how often has his hand leaned on this right sleeve. So, so! breaking down together, the old heart, the old confidence in life, the old coat, and the old head. O my brother, my brother! If I could only hear from you, or of you again, that you were living as a man of honour ought to live, and striving to redeem the past, and to repay debts—I could die happy.'

As he thus walked, dreaming and despondent, he took the wrong road, and instead of coming home found himself on Vauxhall Bridge. He was nearly run over by a cab, and he ran against a policeman. He trod in a bed of mud swept to the side of the road, and splashed himself to the knees. When he found himself on the bridge, then he woke to the fact that he had strayed. Then, all at once, a cheering thought flashed upon him, and he held up his head. 'To be sure!' he said, 'now I

remember, the young fellows often told me never to go near Dawkins on a Monday; I will go to him on Saturday, and offer him a little bottle of best brandy—that will warm the cockles of his heart, and dispose him to make the most of my old coat. It may not be quite the right thing to make use of his failing for my own ends, but it cannot be helped; I cannot possibly purchase a new greatcoat. Four guineas are—well—four guineas.’ Encouraged by this hope, the old man bought a bottle of excellent Cognac, put it under his greatcoat, and on Saturday revisited the tailor.

‘How do you do, Mr. Dawkins? Better than on Monday.’

‘Middling, Major, only middling.’

Then the old gentleman produced the bottle.

‘Look here, Mr. Dawkins, I’ve brought you some real grand old Cognac. I pray you to accept it of me.’

The tailor was delighted, his face lit up. He was profuse in his thanks. But the moment the crafty Major approached the subject of the greatcoat, Mr. Dawkins’s face fell, and he said—‘No, it is of no use! You must have a new greatcoat.’

‘Is it not really possible——?’

‘Absolutely impossible. Now, look here, Major. For you I will bait a point, and make the greatcoat for three-pound-ten. That is my lowest figure. Leave it to me. I will give you good cloth and good cut and good needlework. Three-pun-ten.’

Major Cornelius again left the tailor’s.

He had little heart to finish his Reminiscences. Finish them, however, he did, under much provocation from us. We sat in conclave over them, and suggested touches here and there; some were accepted by general acclamation, others rejected. Robbins wanted to trim one or two of the anecdotes and give them additional point; but the old man would allow of no improvement at the expense of truth. We greatly wanted him to corroborate or contradict the famous story of the ‘Up, Guards, and at them!’ as some were disposed to relegate these words to the limbo of mythical *mots*, but he had been in another part of the field from Lord Wellington, and was not in a position to pass an opinion on the authenticity of the memorable order.

I, as a good scribe, wrote out a clean copy of the Recollections, and the MS. was sent to one of the magazines. It was accepted.

‘I wonder what I shall receive for it?’ he said.

‘I dare say four guineas,’ said Robbins.

‘That is about the figure,’ said another.

Now, some thirty years ago it was the way with certain magazines—I do not say all—to keep a MS. some three or four months, then to print it, and to pay for it perhaps three months later, so that six months elapsed between the acceptance of a short article and payment for it. Some magazines kept MS. still longer, and paid for it still more reluctantly, and these magazines in good repute. Others never paid at all. I dare say things are altered now in this department as in many others; but such *was* the case. Major Cornelius knew nothing of this, nor did we, all as inexperienced as himself. We supposed that his Reminiscences would be out in a week, and paid for at once.

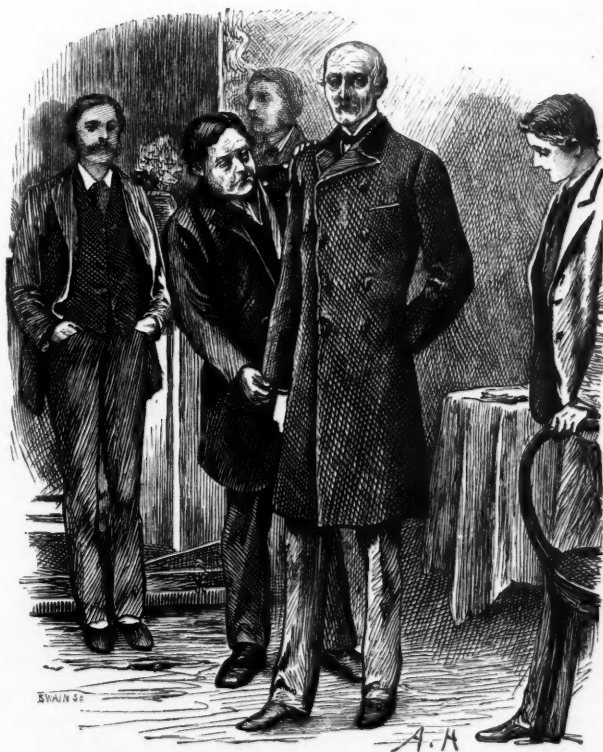
We were all so certain that, as the MS. was accepted, it would be paid for, and so certain, also, that the Major would receive no sum less than four guineas for it, that he ventured again to the tailor's, and ordered the greatcoat, which was promised him for three-pound-ten.

I believe we—that is, all Miss Jones's boarders, except the old lady with the teeth—were as much interested in the greatcoat as the old man himself. We held our breath when we heard that the coat was ordered, we were impatient for it to be fitted, we consumed with eagerness to see it worn.

First the cloth had to be chosen, and the colour decided on. Then Major Cornelius had to submit to the ignominy of being measured. At last the day dawned on which he was to be fitted. He went with trembling heart to the house of Dawkins, and had to put his arms through two holes in something which was supposed to be the coat, but which was a mere tabard of bits of cloth stitched together, with long stitches of an inch each—of white cotton. Why white cotton is always used for the preliminary stitching together, I should like to know. Mr. Dawkins went round the Major several times, with a bit of flesh-coloured chalk between his lips, and grunted, and raised and depressed his eyebrows, and made chalk sweeps with the thing that looked like pink soap, especially under the arms, which tailors never, as far as my experience reaches, cut right at first, and allow for sufficiently. Then he made pink lines down the Major's back. Then he caught him by the lappets and gave him a tug and jerk towards him, and finally dismissed him with a 'That'll do.'

At last the greatcoat arrived, brought by Mr. Dawkins himself. He brought it in the evening, when we were all at home, except

Robbins, who was at the theatre. We sat round the room and saw the garment put on, expressing our delight in low murmurs and sudden ejaculations. Mr. Dawkins was proud of his performance. The Major stood in the middle of the room; the table was thrust aside that all might see. Mr. Dawkins pulled the tail down with a jerk; then he buttoned the coat across the chest; then he made the Major raise and depress his arms, like a cock flapping his wings. It fitted to perfection. It was faultless.



The tailor drew back and looked at it, with his head on one side; then he turned his head the other way; then he walked round the Major. No—nothing needed rectification. Then he looked at us all, one after another, seeking commendation. He

received it. Perfection is not often encountered in life; but that coat was perfection.

‘You will find the bill in the pocket, sir,’ said Mr. Dawkins. ‘After three months, five per cent.’

When Mr. Dawkins was gone, then all restraint on our enthusiasm was removed; we almost danced round the Major; our expressions of admiration were lavish, and, I must admit, extravagant. The old man smiled, and bore a little banter, mixed with the congratulations, with great good-humour. His pleasant face was lighted with a smile, and a little—just a little—pride. He was conscious in his heart, he felt in every fibre of his system, that he looked well in the new greatcoat.

‘Is it warm?’ asked one.

‘Warm! It sends a glow through me,’ he replied. ‘Now, my dear friends, I will confide something to you. I am going out to dinner to-night to my old friend and fellow-soldier, Sir Archibald Busby. The tailor has been very good; he has kept his word, and given me the greatcoat to go in. He promised it for to-day, and, relying on his promise, I accepted the invitation. I could not go in the old greatcoat; it was inconveniently thin, and hardly respectable.’

Going to dine with General Sir Archibald Busby, K.C.B.! We all rose in our own estimation, because we ate at the same table, and slept under the same roof, and warmed our shins at the same fire with one who was invited to dine with that distinguished soldier. Sir Archibald Busby—a K.C.B. also! How we would talk to our relatives and acquaintances of our friend Cornelius, who dined with Sir Archibald and Lady Busby! We must positively see the Major in his dress coat, and help him on with his greatcoat when he went forth.

It was time for him to dress, so he went upstairs. One of us expedited the universal drudge with shaving water, another took all the loose hairs out of the general clothes-brush, a third went down into the boot-hole to make sure that the old gentleman’s boots were brushed up brilliant as patent leather.

He came down at last, looking very bright, and fresh, and delightful. The curl on his temple was turned with consummate art. His dress suit was without a speck. It had not been worn for several years. His collars were very erect, and white, and military-looking. We hovered about him in the passage. The old lady on the first floor came out upon the landing and glowered

over the banisters, and nearly dropped her teeth out of her jaws. Miss Jones rose to the surface from downstairs; the maid-of-all-work, with her nose blackened and polished, looked on in amazement and far-off adoration.

‘What time may we expect you home, Major?’ asked Miss Jones.

‘About twelve or half-past. I shall not be late.’

‘Mary Jemima shall sit up,’ said Miss Jones.

‘O no! we will all sit up. We can’t sleep till we have seen the Major return from his dinner. O Major Cornelius! what ravages you will commit this evening on the hearts of the ladies! You are perfectly irresistible. If only they could see you in the greatcoat!’

He laughed; then three of us rushed and knocked our heads together in our eagerness to help him into the new greatcoat. When we had encased him, and buttoned him in, we made him turn round under the gaslight.

‘Don’t you feel tempted to kiss him, Miss Jones?’ asked one of the youngsters.

‘For shame! Oh, fie!’ Then Miss Jones went down, down the kitchen stairs with a blush on her face; and the maid-of-all-work went off into convulsive giggles.

‘Good-evening, sir!’ we called, as he went to the door. ‘We shall all sit up for you; and may you well enjoy yourself.’

As he had his hand on the door the postman’s rap came loud, and made the old man draw back with a start. However, he had the door open and had faced the postman before the letter was put in the box.

‘For you, sir.’

‘All right, thank you.’ He had no time to look at the letter then; he slipped it into his greatcoat pocket, and went forth.

We clubbed together for a bottle of British brandy, we heaped up the fire with what remained of coals in the box, after Miss Jones was gone. We got the ‘general’ Jemima to supply us with hot water and tumblers. We persuaded Miss Jones to let us have a bowl full of sugar, to be charged in our bills. We sat up and discussed the Major. We were so pleased that the dear old man had gone out; it would brighten his life. He would laugh and tell his stories, and recall old reminiscences with his fellow-veterans; he would associate once more with those in his

own rank of life. We did not say aloud, but we felt, that he belonged to a different order than ourselves. We were jolly fellows, good fellows, no nonsense about us, and all that ; but we had not his polish of mind and manner, that indescribable something which forms an invisible yet impassable barrier between the classes in life.

Twelve o'clock ! He promised to be home by midnight, or shortly after, and the Major was punctual. At twelve-twenty we heard his key in the door, but he seemed unable to open it. One of us went into the passage to unlatch. Two or three of us stood up and filled the doorway of the sitting-room.

'The old gentleman has taken so much port that he can't hit the keyhole. Wicked old Major !' said one.

But, when the door opened, and we saw him, in the glare from the hall light, the rising joke died away on our lips.

He arrived in his dress suit, *without the greatcoat*.

'Good gracious, Major ! Why ! what is the meaning of this ? Where is the greatcoat ?'

He came in, looking very white and depressed, the curl over his forehead out of twist, his collars limp, his shoulders stooping. He walked more lamely than usual. We made him come into the warm room. His hands were like ice. We forced him to take some spirit and water. We tried to rouse him. It was in vain. He looked utterly crushed.

'What is the matter, sir ? What has happened ?'

After a while we learned what had occurred. The evening had passed very pleasantly ; never more so. When he left the drawing-room, he descended to the hall and asked for his greatcoat. It was lost. It was nowhere hanging up. It had not fallen behind a bench. It was not lying across a chair. Then the porter said he was very much afraid that some rascal, taking advantage of the door being open upon the arrival of a guest, had slipped into the hall unobserved, and had walked off with the newest and best of the greatcoats. Thus was the disappearance accounted for. It could be accounted for on no other hypothesis.

'Shall we lend you one of Sir Archibald's to go home in ?' asked the servant.

'No, thank you.'

So the Major had walked home in his dress suit, without his new greatcoat. That was lost—lost for ever. There was not the smallest prospect of its being recovered. The poor old man was



utterly cast down. Without the greatcoat he could no longer walk abroad respectably. He sat in the arm-chair, with his head down and his hands shaking. We did our best to encourage him; but what could we promise? He could not possibly raise the money for a new greatcoat. Besides, this one, now lost, was unpaid for. He would not take more than a little drop of brandy and water. He could not look before him. The future was not to be faced without a greatcoat. Presently he stood up and lit his candle; he would go to bed. He was tired; perhaps to-morrow he would be better.

We squeezed his hand, and sat speechless, listening to his foot as he went up stairs. He dragged his lame leg wearily after him.

‘Poor old chap!’ said I; ‘he seems done for completely.’

Next morning we were all assembled at breakfast—that is, all but the Major—when a rap came at the front door and a ring at the bell. Jemima answered. A moment after she came in with the greatcoat—yes, the identical greatcoat over her arm. Sir Archibald’s valet had brought it. He had seen it, with the other, in the hall, had believed it to belong to a gentleman staying in the house, and, to avoid confusion, had removed it to the library. The mistake had only been found out when all the guests were gone, and the servant had come over with the greatcoat the first thing in the morning.

I ran upstairs, to rouse the Major with the joyful news. I knocked at his door, but received no answer. I opened it and looked in. I saw the old man on his knees by his bedside. He was saying his prayers. I would not disturb him, so drew back. He was a long time over these same prayers. I looked in again. He had not stirred. Then, with a start, I saw that the bed had not been slept in, and the Major was in his dress suit. I went up to him and touched him.

He was dead.

The loss of the greatcoat had been the last disappointment he could bear. The brave old heart had given up the battle, and had stopped beating.

When, afterwards, the greatcoat pockets were searched, there were found in them two letters. One was the bill for the coat; the other bore an American stamp. It was from his brother—a penitent letter; he was now doing well, and he enclosed to Major Cornelius a draft for a hundred pounds. The letter had not been opened.

### EXAMINERS AND CANDIDATES.

It happened on this wise. I had just taken my degree at Oxford, and, elated by the full sleeves of my bachelor gown, I naturally felt that a career of triumph was in store for me. Still, at the moment, I had not settled the plan for my life-campaign. In fact, my degree had come a little earlier than I had expected. The betting in the best-informed circles had been three to one against my passing my Second School when I did. However, I had passed it, had discomfited the bookmakers, and was now at one and the same time enjoying my triumph and casting about in my mind what I should do next.

At this juncture I received a message from the president of my college, requesting my attendance. There was nothing unusual or alarming in this. At an earlier stage in my academical career it would have been disquieting in the extreme, the president being a *Deus ex machinâ* whose intervention always meant some unlucky tangle in undergraduate affairs. Now, however, though still nominally in the pupil state, I had practically got beyond all such dangers. And I knew that the president was in the habit of sending such a message as I had received to every fresh-fledged graduate.

So I accepted the invitation without any special fear, and with only that general, undefined uneasiness which one cannot at once cast off with one's undergraduate's gown. And yet, as I had often noticed before, anything less awe-inspiring than our good president it would be difficult to imagine. It must have been the divinity of his office that made him formidable, for the man himself was exceptionally meek and mild. It is true he was constructed on a somewhat large scale, but he was physically flabby, whilst he had but little power of moral self-assertion. His health was indifferent, his voice was always tremulous, and he spoke sometimes with a positive stammer. His learning was popularly supposed to be of the profoundest order. Certain it is, he devoted almost all his time to reading, getting up at six o'clock summer and winter to pursue his studies the more effectually; but, as far as I know, nothing came of it all. He had never published a line, and for many years past had not

delivered a lecture, and I never noticed that he threw the slightest new light on anything in conversation.

He was engaged in poring over a dingy folio as I entered his study. He had started a little when I was announced, but the start had not been strong enough to tear him from his book. At last I ventured to cough.

'Oh!—ah!—yes; I beg your pardon,' he said, looking round and forcing a smile. 'I was thinking of something else at the moment.'

He seemed to be still thinking of the something else, for his eye had a very vacant expression. However, by degrees it gathered a little more meaning, as he advanced towards me, holding out his hand.

'I have to congratulate you, Mr. Melrose, on being now a graduate. Let me see; you took honours, I think?'

The question did not strike me as a happy one, as I had to answer it in the negative.

'Just so,' said the president, a little confused. 'I must have been thinking of some one else. No doubt it is a good thing to take honours; but, after all, there are various positions in life for which they are not essential.'

'I hope so, sir,' I said. The president's remark struck me as being deficient in breadth.

'By the way,' he resumed, 'I remember now what I wanted to see you about. You will, I suppose, be looking about for something to do. Or have you some plan already in view?'

'No, sir,' I said, 'I have nothing at all in view.'

I might have added—'except enjoying myself a little,' but I was mercifully preserved from saying this.

'I wonder,' resumed the president, dreamily, 'whether this would suit you. I don't profess to understand it, but you seem to be just what they require.'

It was clear to me that the president was pursuing his own line of thought, and in fact had got pretty well to the end of it before I had reached the beginning. So I pulled him up gently.

'I am afraid I do not quite understand, sir.'

'Quite right—quite right, Mr. Melrose. I had almost forgotten the letter. Where can I have put it? Never mind, however, I think I can, perhaps, explain it sufficiently for you to—to—do—what you think best in the matter.'

I bowed expectantly, and the president went on:—

‘It seems that for some of these Civil Service Examinations they want sometimes additional examiners. I presume the ordinary staff is not sufficiently large—there is so much economy nowadays, especially in everything connected with the Government. Perhaps it is hardly worthy of a nation such as ours. However, it is in this way that the opportunity arises.’

The president stopped, as if he had fully delivered himself of his message. But it was still a little obscure to me.

‘Do I understand, sir, that the Civil Service Commissioners require my help?’

It was unintentionally a conceited way of asking the question, and I could see that even the president noticed it, for he half smiled as he answered:—

‘They do not ask for you by name, Mr. Melrose; but one of the officials, Mr. Guy Sinjin, an old member of this college, has just written to me to ask if I know of any young men who have just taken their degree and would like to help in this way.’

‘I wonder if it’s hard work,’ I said.

The president did not like the remark. All his life he had been an example of hard work and of its occasional inutility. Something like a frown gathered upon his placid features. I hastened to divert his thoughts.

‘I suppose,’ I said, ‘there is some remuneration?’

‘The remuneration,’ answered the president, with unusual emphasis, ‘is paltry—quite unworthy of a Government like ours. I was struck by it, I remember, when I read Mr. Sinjin’s letter. Fifteen shillings a day! Shillings always seem to remind one of artisans. Nothing under a guinea should be offered to a gentleman.’

‘Or accepted by him?’ I asked, for I was not captivated by the prospect set before me.

Then something of the innate paternal goodness of the president came to light. He actually laid a hand—very timidly, it is true—on my shoulder.

‘Believe me,’ he said, ‘anything is better for a young man than idleness. If you have nothing else in view, it can do you no harm to help these people.’

There was just a tinge of contempt in the tone in which he spoke of Her Majesty’s Commissioners. The fifteen shillings a day had left an uncomfortable feeling in his mind. But I was touched by his kindly interest in myself, and I made up my mind

on the spot to place my valuable services at the disposal of the Commissioners. The country should not suffer through the lack of my assistance.

As a consequence of this interview, I received, a few days later, a barely legible scrawl from some superior clerk requesting me to attend at Burlington House at ten o'clock on the following Wednesday in order to assist at the forthcoming Army Examination.

At that time I knew nothing of the internal arrangements of Burlington House, so at the appointed time I followed an undisciplined horde of examination candidates into what apparently were, or should have been, the cellars of the establishment, whence I mounted with difficulty a stone staircase which led to regions somewhat nearer the light of day. These upper regions were guarded by non-commissioned officers, who, with one consent, began unintentionally to insult me by taking me for one of the candidates, and requesting me to descend again into the depths from which I had just arisen. With difficulty and some loss of dignity, I explained to these vigilant guardians that I was come as an examiner, and requested to be conducted to Mr. Smithson, the clerk who had written to me. My interview with this gentleman was of the shortest. Expecting an immediate irruption of the barbarians now in the lower regions, he was in a state of wild excitement, his chief aim being how best to dispose of his own very scanty force of examiners.

'Mr. Melrose?—oh!—yes—quite right—very glad you've come. Will you stand here—at this door? Don't let any one pass without showing his ticket, and just direct them to their places.'

'But I don't know them myself,' I said, looking aghast at the gigantic hall, containing some two or three hundred desks.

'Oh! yes—nothing is easier. It begins here, you see. Up there—down along the wall—back again along the other side—then in front of the examiners' desk, and so on in the same way throughout.'

I have no doubt I am very stupid, but Mr. Smithson's explanation didn't seem to help me in the least. To himself, however, it was so perfectly satisfactory that he left me at once with the air of one who had smoothed away every possible difficulty.

He had scarcely gone before the enemy arrived with a rush.

I had stationed myself manfully on one side of a very wide doorway, resolved to do my duty or die at my post. But, as a matter of fact, I did neither. The undisciplined horde of future disciplinarians carried the position by mere force of numbers and impetuosity. Whilst I was asking for one man's ticket, his companions swept past me in triumph. As to finding time to direct any one to his place, I didn't attempt it.

Mr. Smithson came up in good time to witness my defeat.

'Oh! dear!' he exclaimed plaintively, 'I asked you to be kind enough not to let any one pass without showing his ticket. Now we don't know where we are!'

I knew my own position well enough, and thought I would rather have been anywhere else. This was a poor beginning, but I noticed that another assistant examiner, who had been standing on the opposite side of the door, and who, therefore, shared with me the responsibility of failure, only smiled cheerfully, as if to say, 'That's merely Smithson's way; he always takes things at high pressure.' This relieved my feelings, as I did not then know that the gentleman who thus dared to smile at an official crisis was justly regarded by all the clerks of the Civil Service as a desperate character wholly unfitted to take any part in a Government examination.

All the young aspirants to military fame managed at last to find their proper desks, numbered to match the figures on their tickets. They did this without much assistance on my part, or, as far as I could see, on the part of any other official, but with all the more noise and commotion on their own part. On each desk there was a printed examination-paper, French or German, as the case might be. After a good deal of preliminary humming, the swarm settled down to this intellectual honey.

In the meantime I had found my way to a raised platform at one end of the room, where a number of officials were congregated. Chief amongst them was the indefatigable Mr. Smithson. He was engaged in giving a few official hints to the assistant examiners. They were given in a very polite and judiciously oblique style.

'Of course the great thing would be to see that there is nothing whatever in the way of copying. The Commissioners think that that would defeat the very object of an examination.'

I could not help thinking what clever men the Commissioners must be to have made this grand discovery.

'They suggest moving quietly about the room, or sitting for a while at some unoccupied desk. The great thing would be always to be on the alert. The Commissioners are disposed to think that reading newspapers would tend to interfere with the careful oversight of the candidates. Mr. Everard will be in charge of this room, and will be happy to answer any further questions.'

No questions at all had been asked, so, I suppose, this last phrase was an official formula, marking the end of a speech. At any rate, Mr. Smithson, having discharged himself of it, fled immediately from the room, bent, I have no doubt, on delivering it again, with the least possible loss of time, in some other room.

On his departure, Mr. Everard took the central chair at the examiners' table. I looked at him with some interest. He was not himself an examiner, it being the custom at these examinations to intrust the larger rooms to the care of one of the permanent officials. I imagine that the day-labourers, with all their brilliant qualities, were found at times to be somewhat deficient in backbone, and they necessarily lacked that traditionary knowledge of routine which is so essential in every department of government.

Mr. Everard looked very much an official, and had a considerable air of permanence about him, as he sat bolt upright in his armchair. I may add that he was conspicuous for physical uprightness. During the whole day he never unbent, though I noticed that he writhed his shoulders about uneasily from time to time. Later in the day he explained this to me by denouncing the armchair for having a curved back, the mere proximity of which always made him uncomfortable. As his manner matched his attitude, he formed an interesting study to me. On the whole, I found that we had very little in common, but we were able to unite in a certain lofty discontent at the pettiness of the department that was employing us. The Civil Service, according to Mr. Everard, had sunk just about as low as a department could sink. He gave no special grounds for this assertion, but seemed to put it forth as an obvious and recognised truth; and certainly I needed no formal proof, the fifteen shillings a day having once for all convinced me.

Obedying the instructions I had received, I began prowling about among the candidates, quite resolved, however, not to catch any prey if I could possibly help it. My own examinations were still too fresh in my recollection for me to feel anything but



sympathy for these unhappy victims of the great education craze. But I soon discovered that this prowling was not without its dangers to myself, ignorant as I was of official etiquette. It is a well-known fact that examination-papers, which are set with the express purpose of testing the accuracy of students, are themselves, as a rule, models of inaccuracy. There is some excuse for this. Such papers are always printed as short a time as possible before the examination. In fact, at some of our examinations the candidates arrived before the papers. Thus there is always a hurry in connection with them, and in consequence they furnish almost as rich a harvest of grotesque mistakes as the papers of the unsuccessful competitors. The present occasion was no exception to the rule. The German paper bristled with appalling absurdities, which might well have made the most sanguine candidate despair of ever getting through it with unimpaired sanity. I noticed how the poor fellows were racking their brains, but, as they had been brought here for the torture, of course I could not interfere. That was a matter they must settle for themselves with their enlightened country. But when one poor youth, pointing with a trembling finger to an excessively corrupt passage in the German paper, asked imploringly whether a certain word wasn't a misprint, I condescended to read the sentence, and, having assured myself of its abject absurdity, answered in the affirmative. This seemed to cheer him a little, and he resumed with a somewhat better heart his weary task. But when, in completion of my orbit, I came into contact once again with Mr. Everard, and told him what I had done, he became positively rigid with consternation.

'It's never done, you know,' he said—'never! I don't know what the Commissioners would say if they knew it! It amounts, you see, to an interference with the examination; and then, too, all those you haven't told it to have a just right to complain. I only hope we shall be able to keep it quiet.'

This fine official tempest in a tea-pot amused me not a little, and in this particular case my conduct received a certain justification, for shortly afterwards the German examiner arrived, very hot and with a flurried air, and begged to explain that there were several misprints in the German paper, which he then proceeded to correct, amongst them being the one on which I had already pronounced judgment. Thus equal justice was meted out to all.

While this corrected paper was undergoing various degrees of

maltreatment at the hands of the different candidates, I had time to exchange a few words with some of the other examiners. There were three such in the room, and I was not long in discovering that one was a barrister—probably briefless—another a half-pay captain in the army, and the third an elderly colonel. It struck me that, taken as a whole, we were an amusing assortment. On what principle the selection had been made I did not know, nor have I ever since found the clue to this mystery. But wisdom is justified of her children.

After the German and French papers had been done, or left undone, as the case might be, we had a most amusing scene, enacted under the name of English Dictation. No one then present in the room being considered competent to deliver himself of this dictation effectually, a hunt was made, apparently in some remote corner of the building, for a specially dictatorial examiner, who, after a while, appeared with an air of much importance. It almost seemed as if he were kept in a separate room for his voice to accumulate. This gentleman either was at that time, or had been at some previous time, a clergyman, and was supposed to have acquired in the pulpit a strength and purity of intonation impossible to the thin-voiced haunters of pews. I must do him the justice to say that, as he was a man of high culture and gifted with a splendid voice, I can quite believe that in the pulpit he was a very effective preacher. But a conscientious desire to discharge his duty to the Civil Service Commissioners had developed in him a style of reading seldom heard in any pulpit. The fact was, he was over-anxious to give exactly the right sound and emphasis to each individual syllable. Take care of the syllables and the words will take care of themselves, was apparently his maxim. Moreover, the official custom of reading the sentence over twice, and pausing at different points in the two readings, gave to it something of the nature of a dreary, monotonous catch. Add to these drawbacks a decided echo in the room, and you have some idea of the difficulty of the task now set before the enfeebled survivors of the German and French papers. Sitting at the farther end of the room, I was aware that a gentleman on the platform was engaged in the most painstaking manner in shouting out some sentences of an articulate language, but the sentences themselves were incomprehensible to me. I remember catching something about 'Fred,' followed, as it seemed, by a sneeze in sections, and then the word 'mate,' and I could not help wondering at the

selection of such a colloquial piece of English composition. On referring afterwards to the printed paper, I found that the opening sentence ran somewhat as follows :—

‘ Alfred’s achievement in this respect is difficult to estimate,’ &c. &c.

Whilst I was congratulating myself on being an examiner and not a candidate, I heard muttered sounds as of rebellion in my immediate neighbourhood. They proceeded from a young man very showily dressed, and, as they were evidently not intended for publication (for which indeed their nature unfitted them), I shall best fulfil my duty by suppressing them. They seemed to me to be playing the part ascribed in fiction to the lion’s tail. Before, however, the actual outbreak came, one of the doors opened and three figures—one venerable and all-impressive—entered. I saw at once from their own demeanour and that of Mr. Everard that these were no ordinary mortals; and I soon gathered from a whisper near me that they were the Celestials—I mean the Commissioners—themselves, or some of them. May I be forgiven! but I cannot remember how many Commissioners there ought to be.

Now will it be believed that the advent of these portentous beings struck not the slightest terror into the breast of the young man mentioned above? Instead of pocketing his annoyance, whatever it might be, and setting a beautiful example of patience and resignation, he actually started up and exclaimed in much clearer tones than those of the examiner: ‘It’s all bosh; it’s impossible to make it out!’

The Commissioners bore it very well—I must say that. Perhaps they are used to incidents of the kind. It may be that their appearance is always the signal for some audacious spirit to leap into the breach of the moment. I think from what followed I should have been tempted to appeal to them, had I subsequently been a candidate. For the Chief Commissioner, without turning a hair even at that very unofficial word ‘bosh’—in fact, ignoring altogether the opening clause in the young man’s impetuous speech—blandly asked him what he wanted. It thereupon appeared that the young man wanted to get close to the examiner’s desk in order to hear the dictation better. The request was granted, but I doubt if it would have been granted had the consequences been foreseen. For there followed a scene of disorganisation which must have sorely tried the fortitude of Mr. Everard.

In the opinion of the candidates, what was granted for one was granted for all, and a physical competition for seats took the place of the mental competition for appointments. It was some time before quiet could be restored, and I confess I hardly wondered at the bitter way in which Mr. Everard, commenting afterwards on this scene, gave it as his opinion, based on long and careful observation, that the Commissioners would do a great deal better to keep away during the examinations.

As all examinations are conducted on the principle of regarding candidates, like Siberian convicts, as nameless numbers, there is no greater abomination to an examiner than the spectacle of a candidate sitting at a desk which does not correspond to his individual number. Judge, then, of our feelings (for the moment I identify myself with the official staff) when, after the intervention and departure of the Celestials, we found that almost every candidate was in a wrong place. Mr. Smithson, returning at this juncture, was momentarily paralysed, but rapidly recovering himself was about to deliver an oblique oration as to the general wishes of the Commissioners, when he was interrupted by Mr. Everard, who explained, in a manner largely leavened with disgust, that the present imbroglio was the direct work of the Commissioners themselves. He also pointed out the ringleader—that very audacious youth with the loud voice and corresponding attire.

When we had fitted them once more with their numbers—convicted them, as it were, a second time—we turned with some interest to the official key, by the aid of which each number could be converted into a name, in order to inform ourselves as to the identity of the ringleader. Of course I am not going to reveal his name. Suffice it to say that he proved to be a young aristocrat whose father might have asked awkward questions in the House of Lords had the ingenuous youth failed to pass in his dictation.

I cannot within the limits of one paper detail all the incidents of what was to me a very amusing day. What tickled me I think most was the fact that, though engaged as assistant-examiner, I did absolutely no examining throughout the day. But when the candidates were at last dismissed, the indefatigable Mr. Smithson, appearing once again (he had, I think, been superintending meanwhile another examination at South Kensington), asked us, the so-called examiners, if we wished to take any

papers home with us. From this I gathered that it was possible to supplement the fifteen shillings by private piece-work. We could retire to our dens and mumble the bones of our victims at our leisure, if we felt so inclined. Personally I had not the faintest desire to extend my day's work. Enough is as good as a feast, even in the case of such a racy entertainment as a Government examination. But the hungrier amongst my colleagues seized with avidity the proffered papers. Why they did so, I cannot say. There is no accounting for the vagaries of appetite. I only know that the *honorarium* offered was not seductive in its amount.

The Army Examination lasted, I think, three days. At its close I was honoured with an invitation to assist the Commissioners at their own offices in Whitehall. Here the procedure was rather different. The examinations were smaller—I use the official term employed when there is a small number of candidates. Sometimes the number was very small indeed. In fact, I have known a solitary individual present himself for a competitive examination—I presume against himself. Of course under these circumstances he ought to be able to form a fair idea of his chances of success. However, it is not so. Though he can hardly defeat himself, he may yet fail to come up to the pass standard so rigidly upheld by the department. I remember one such case—that of a middle-aged man who came up to be examined for some post as park-keeper. He was a fine soldierly fellow, who had been in the army, and who looked just the right man for the post. And it was understood that the Commander-in-Chief, who had nominated him, was anxious that he should pass. It fell to my lot to examine him. No one could have treated the poor fellow more tenderly. I had to insert the hook, but I did it as if I loved him. I can hardly hope to be forgiven (officially) for the leniency I showed him. I got him to read. It was pitiful to see his cowardice in the presence of the enemy. It is true, he showed a bold front to monosyllables, but he faltered before a dissyllable, and threw down his arms at the very sight of a trisyllable. Shall I confess it? I passed him in this department of general knowledge. What shall I say of his writing? A system of literary semaphores to which he alone had the key. Again I passed him, as also in what, for want of a better term, one must call his arithmetic. Who was I, that I should judge him unfit to keep order in a park? But, alas! my kindness was

thrown away. All such paper-work must pass through the hands of two examiners. My colleague, hardened in the traditions of the office, failed to see any germs of excellence in the poor man's written semaphores. As to his arithmetic, I doubt if any one except myself ever seriously grappled with it. In short, he went away rejected and disconsolate.

The whole department often struck me as a kind of gigantic spider's-web. Any luckless candidate who entered was at once seized and all his vitality sucked out of him on the spot. When at last he emerged again it was as little more than the mere limp, flaccid *simulacrum* of his former self. Inside the building there were always half a dozen or more examiners waiting for prey in different rooms. Whilst thus waiting they corrected papers—so many were expected to be done in the hour—and regaled each other with professional anecdotes. These generally turned on the helpless struggles of their victims, or on those of the examiners themselves with that complicated python 'the Department.'

On one occasion the candidates had the best of it. I think it was when the telegraph clerkships were first thrown open to the fair sex. An incautiously worded notice to that effect had been inserted in the papers, and the result was one never to be forgotten. On the morning fixed for the examination the whole street was packed with competitive young ladies. Far as Mr. Smithson's eye could reach, there was nothing but one serried mass of hats and bonnets and parasols! They stormed the office, or, more literally, flooded it, leaving no nook or cranny unoccupied. And the cry was 'Still they come!' I was not present, but the scene has often been described to me by awestruck officials. I believe the Department, tough as it undoubtedly is, temporarily collapsed under the strain. But no one seems to know exactly what took place after the building had been stormed. This is in itself, perhaps, the best proof of the awful confusion that must have prevailed. To this day Mr. Smithson never refers to it except with bated breath.

As I have mentioned the fair sex, I will add (under shelter of anonymity) that I did not at all like the task of examining them. I deeply regret to say it, but I certainly found them much more troublesome than the competitive males. It is very difficult to maintain discipline amongst them, or to arouse in them any keen sense of the virtue of scrupulousness. I shall never forget being

intrusted with the examination of certain eight young ladies. The first thing that struck me was that they had evidently arrayed themselves in their most exaggerated costumes, no doubt with the view of insinuating themselves into the favour of their judges. Though somewhat nervous and jerky in manner, it was clear that they fully meant to fascinate. Poor things! they little knew the iron sternness of the Department. It was with difficulty that I got them to sit down, and with still greater difficulty that I induced them not to crowd together. (I should mention that the room in which we were was furnished, not with isolated desks, but with the old-fashioned continuous desks and forms.) When I had distributed the papers and delivered a Smithsonian harangue on the necessity of silence and the enormity of copying, I resumed my own work. Almost immediately, I became aware of a rustling sound, and, looking up, beheld, to my consternation, my eight fair protégées all close together like the coloured beads upon a frame, taking sweet counsel together on the subject of the paper.

‘Ladies,’ I said sternly, ‘this will never do. I must ask you once for all to keep your places.’

Nothing could have been clearer than my meaning, or, as I think, more impressive than my manner; but one very ‘unfinished’ damsel had the pertness to answer:—

‘Mustn’t we go back to them first?’

Hereupon there was an audible titter, which I pretended not to hear. Moreover, following the noble example set at the Army Examination by the Chief Commissioner himself, I ignored anything disrespectful in the question, and replied:—

‘Yes, you must go back to your places, if you please. You ought not to have left them.’

I may as well allow at once, however, that all my efforts to infuse a lofty official sense of duty into these wilful maidens were utterly unsuccessful. The way in which they copied from one another was simply appalling. I did not look over their papers afterwards, but the family likeness between them must have been surprising.

When the paper-work was over, it appeared that no less than five of the eight young ladies wished to speak to me privately. I did not know whether to feel flattered or embarrassed by this desire. However, feeling bound to hear what a candidate had to say, I requested No. 1 to favour me with her communica-



tion. It was very lengthy, and was delivered with great volubility in an extraordinarily high key. I will not attempt to reproduce it exactly—that would be quite beyond my powers; but it was to the general effect that she (the speaker) would have done her papers a great deal better—would, in fact, have triumphed over them completely—but for the circumstance that her maiden aunt, Miss Cox, who lived at No. 5, Laburnum Villas, Bermondsey, and who had brought her up since the death of her poor father of typhoid fever in the year 1867, was unfortunately very deaf, though otherwise highly talented and accomplished, and that in consequence Miss Tibbits (she had at the very beginning utterly refused to yield to my entreaty and speak of herself as a number, but had persisted in introducing herself as Miss Tibbits) had not derived all the advantages from her aunt's instruction which she would most certainly have derived under different circumstances. And she desired me, as the examiner, to take this into account, as was only fair and right, in looking over her papers.

By this time I had learnt the official formula for answering the questions of candidates. I consider that, as a piece of simple verbal mechanism readily adjustable to occasion, it deserves a patent. It runs thus: 'The Commissioners alone decide on the papers, but I am quite sure that they will allow due weight to any circumstances that deserve consideration.' Isn't it beautiful? First you state an incontrovertible fact about the Commissioners, which relieves you personally of all further annoyance. And as the Commissioners are not as a rule accessible to candidates, they are not inconvenienced. Then you proceed to convey a little temporary consolation to the wounded spirit of the candidate, without committing yourself in the least. That keeps him or her quiet and hopeful, which of course is a great advantage in an examination.

This was the magic formula that I now offered to Miss Tibbits, in the confident expectation that it would meet her requirements, as it had met the requirements of so many others. Nor was I disappointed. Miss Tibbits took it eagerly, and seemed much the better for it. It was not my fault that the good thus done was not likely to be permanent.

The four other young ladies who desired to speak to me had all something similar to say. There were special circumstances in each case which deserved consideration, and which certainly required very lengthy exposition. In each case I applied the

formula, and always with success. When they had finished, I was rather exhausted, but they went away quite satisfied.

I might add many other incidents, but I will pass on to give a specimen of English composition as wrung from a candidate by the examination torture. It was contributed during an Army Examination. The theme of it was: 'Draw a comparison between Milton and Shakespeare.' The comparison actually drawn by the military critic ran thus, *verbatim et literatim*:—

'Samson Agonistes and Hamlet are both very different. Milton's plays are nearly all sacred, which are very different to Shakespeare's. Milton writes in poetry, Shakespeare does not. There are many fewer characters in Samson Agonistes than in Hamlet.'

I confess I see no reason why the author of this remarkable essay should not make a dashing cavalry officer whom no obstacles would daunt, but he is hard on Shakespeare and not very kind to his mother tongue. I should expect that he would prove a severe disciplinarian and, in some directions, a drastic reformer. And I shall always maintain that, as an actual specimen of what high-class education can accomplish for the golden youth of England in the nineteenth century, his essay deserves to live.

For a fortnight I continued to place my services at the disposal of the Commissioners. Then the pressure of work all at once abated and I was informed that there was no further occasion for any additional assistance; at the same time I received an order on Her Majesty's Paymaster-General for a sum of money which, small in itself, was rendered yet smaller by the ruthlessness of the Paymaster in deducting a penny for a stamp. Having acquired possession of what remained, I returned to Oxford in triumph. Meeting the good president in the 'quad,' I had the rare luck to be recognised by him.

'Ah,' he said, 'Mr. Melrose, I thought you were doing something in London—examining or something of that sort.'

'I've done it, sir,' I exclaimed exultantly.

'I hope you liked it?'

'Immensely, sir, it was great fun. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.'

The president looked a little grave. He may have had his doubts whether a young man who could talk of 'fun' in connection with an examination was quite the sort of character whom Mr. Sinjin had wanted. But if this was in his mind he suppressed

it nobly, and it seemed to me as if he took comfort in some other line of thought which he confined himself to shadowing forth.

'It was only fifteen shillings a day after all, wasn't it?' he asked.

'Less a penny stamp,' I added.

'Oh, well, then, there is nothing more to be said!' remarked the president, so oracularly that to this day I am not quite sure what he meant by it.



*BEYOND THE HAZE.*

A WINTER RAMBLE REVERIE.

THE road was straight, the afternoon was grey,  
 The frost hung listening in the silent air;  
 On either hand the rimy fields were bare;  
 Beneath my feet unrolled the long, white way,  
 Drear as my heart, and brightened by no ray  
 From the wide winter sun, whose disc reclined  
 In distant copper sullenness behind  
 The broken network of the western hedge—  
 A crimson blot upon the fading day.

Three travellers went before me—one alone—  
 Then two together, who their fingers nursed  
 Deep in their pockets; and I watched the first  
 Lapse in the curtain the slow haze had thrown  
 Across the vista which had been my own.  
 Next vanished the chill comrades, blotted out  
 Like him they followed, but I did not doubt  
 That there beyond the haze the travellers  
 Walked in the fashion that my sight had known.

Only 'beyond the haze;' oh, sweet belief!  
 That this is also Death; that those we've kissed  
 Between our sobs, are just 'beyond the mist;'  
 An easy thought to juggle with to grief!  
 The gulf seems measureless, and Death a thief.  
 Can we, who were so high, and are so low,  
 So clothed in love, who now in tatters go,  
 Echo serenely, 'Just beyond the haze,'  
 And of a sudden find a trite relief?

## A FEMALE NIHILIST.

### I.

On the 27th of July, in the year 1878, the little town of Talutorovsk, in Western Siberia, was profoundly excited by a painful event. A political prisoner, named Olga Liubatovitch, it was said had miserably put an end to her days. She was universally loved and esteemed, and her violent death therefore produced a most mournful impression throughout the town, and the *Ispravnik*, or chief of the police, was secretly accused of having driven the poor young girl, by his unjust persecutions, to take away her life.

Olga was sent to Talutorovsk, some months after the trial known as that of the 'fifty' of Moscow, in which she was condemned to nine years' hard labour for Socialist propagandism, a punishment afterwards commuted into banishment for life. Unprovided with any means whatever of existence, for her father, a poor engineer with a large family, could send her nothing, Olga succeeded, by indefatigable industry, in establishing herself in a certain position. Although but little skilled in female labour, she endeavoured to live by her needle, and became the milliner of the semi-civilised ladies of the town, who went into raptures over her work. These fair dames were firmly convinced—it is impossible to know why—that the elegance of a dress depends above all things upon the number of its pockets. The more pockets there were, the more fashionable the dress. Olga never displayed the slightest disinclination to satisfy this singular taste. She put pockets upon pockets, upon the body, upon the skirts, upon the underskirts; before, behind, everywhere. The married ladies and the young girls were as proud as peacocks, and were convinced that they were dressed like the most fashionable Parisian, and, though they were less profuse with their money than with their praises, yet in that country, where living costs so little, it was easy to make two ends meet. Later on, Olga had an occupation more congenial to her habits. Before entering the manufactories and workshops as a sempstress in order to carry on the Socialist propaganda, she had studied medicine for some years at Zurich, and she could not now do less than lend her assistance in certain cases of illness. This soon gave her a reputation, and, at the request

of the citizens, the police accorded to her the permission to fill the post of apothecary and phlebotomist, as the former occupant of that post, owing to habitual drunkenness, was fit for nothing. Not unfrequently she even took the place of the district doctor, a worthy man who, owing to old age and a partiality for brandy, was in such a state that he could not venture upon delicate operations, because his hands shook. She acted for him also in many serious cases baffling his antediluvian knowledge. Some of her cures were considered miraculous; among others, that of the district judge, whom, by determined treatment, she had saved after a violent attack of *delirium tremens*, a malady common to almost all men in that wild country.

In a word, Olga was in great favour with the peaceful citizens of Talutorovsk. The hatred of the police towards her was all the greater for that reason. Her proud and independent disposition would not permit her to submit to the stupid and humiliating exigencies of the representatives of the Government. Those representatives, barbarous and overbearing as they were, considered every attempt to defend personal dignity a want of respect towards themselves—nay, a provocation, and neglected no occasion of taking their revenge. There was always a latent war between Olga and her guardians, a war of the weak, bound hand and foot, against the strong, armed at all points; for the police have almost arbitrary power over the political prisoners who are under their surveillance. In this very unequal struggle, however, Olga did not always come off the worst, as often happens in the case of those who, proud, daring, and fearing nothing, are always ready to risk everything for the merest trifle. One of these conflicts, which lasted four days and kept the whole of the little town in a state of excitement by its dramatic incidents, was so singular that it deserves to be related.

Olga had had sent from her parents a parcel of books, which, in her position, was a gift indeed. She went to the *Ispravnik* to get them, but met with an unforeseen obstacle. Among the books sent to her was a translation of the 'Sociology' of Herbert Spencer, and the *Ispravnik* mistook it for a work on *Socialism*, and would not on any account give it up to her. In vain Olga pointed out to him that the incriminated book had been published at St. Petersburg with the licence of the Censorship; that sociology and socialism were very different things, etc. The *Ispravnik* was stubborn. The discussion grew warm. Olga could not restrain

some sharp remarks upon the gross ignorance of her opponent, and ended by telling him that his precautions were utterly useless, as she had at home a dozen books like that of Herbert Spencer.

'Oh! you have books like this at home, have you?' exclaimed the *Ispravnik*. 'Very well; we'll come and search the house this very day.'

'No,' exclaimed Olga, in a fury; 'you will do nothing of the kind; you have no right, and if you dare to come I will defend myself.'

With these words she left the place, thoroughly enraged.

War was declared, and the rumour spread throughout the town, and everywhere excited a kind of timorous curiosity.

Directly Olga reached her home she shut herself up and barricaded the door. The *Ispravnik*, on his side, prepared for the attack. He mustered a band of policemen, with some *poniatye*, or citizen-witnesses, and sent them to the enemy's house.

Finding the entrance closed and the door barricaded, the valorous army began to knock energetically, and ordered the inmate to open.

'I will not open the door,' replied the voice of Olga within.

'Open, in the name of the law.'

'I will not open the door. Break it in! I will defend myself.'

At this explicit declaration the band became perplexed. A council of war was held. 'We must break open the door,' they all said. But as all these valiant folks had families, wives, and children whom they did not wish to leave orphans, no one cared to face the bullets of this mad woman, whom they knew to be capable of anything. Each urged his neighbour onward, but no one cared to go forward himself.

Recourse was had to diplomacy.

'Open the door, miss.'

No reply.

'Please to open the door, or you will repent it.'

'I will not open the door,' replied the firm voice of the besieged.

What was to be done? A messenger was sent to the *Ispravnik* to inform him that Olga Liubatovitch had shut herself up in her house, had pointed a pistol at them, and had threatened to blow out the brains of the first who entered.



The *Ispravnik*, considering that the task of leadership would fall to him as supreme chief (and he also had a family), did not care to undertake the perilous enterprise. His army, seeing itself thus abandoned by its leader, was in dismay; it lost courage; demoralisation set in, and after a few more diplomatic attempts, which led to nothing, it beat a disgraceful retreat. A select corps of observation remained, however, near the enemy's citadel, intrenched behind the hedges of the adjoining kitchen-gardens. It was hoped that the enemy, elated by the victory in this first encounter, would make a sortie, and then would be easily taken, in flank and rear, surrounded, and defeated.

But the enemy displayed as much prudence as firmness. Perceiving the manœuvres of her adversaries, Olga divined their object, and did not issue from the house all that day, or the day after, or even on the third day. The house was provided with provisions and water, and Olga was evidently prepared to sustain a long siege.

It was clear that if no one would risk his life, which naturally no one was disposed to risk, nothing could be done save to reduce her by hunger. But who, in that case, could tell how long the scandal of this flagrant rebellion would last? And then, who could guarantee that this Fury would not commit suicide instead of surrendering? And then, what complaints, what reprimands from superiors!

In this perplexity, the *Ispravnik* resolved to select the least among many evils, and on the fourth day he raised the siege.

Thus ended the little drama of July 1878, known in Siberia as the 'Siege of Olga Liubatovitch.' The best of the joke was, however, that she had no arms of a more warlike character than a penknife and some kitchen utensils. She herself had not the slightest idea what would have happened had they stormed her house, but that she would have defended herself in some way or other is quite certain.

The *Ispravnik* might have made her pay for her rebellion by several years of confinement, but how could he confess to his superiors the cowardice of himself and his subordinates? He preferred, therefore, to leave her in peace. But he chafed in secret, for he saw that the partisans of the young Socialist—and they were far from few—ridiculed himself and his men behind their backs. He determined to vindicate his offended dignity at all cost, and, being of a stubborn disposition, he carried out his resolve in the following manner.

A fortnight after the famous siege, he sent a message to Olga to come to his office at eight o'clock in the morning. She went. She waited an hour; two hours; but no one came to explain what she was wanted for. She began to lose patience, and declared that she would go away. But the official in attendance told her that she must not go; that she must wait; such were the orders of the *Ispravnik*. She waited until eleven o'clock. No one came. At last a subaltern appeared, and Olga addressed herself to him and asked what she was wanted for. The man replied that he did not know, that the *Ispravnik* would tell her when he came in. He could not say, however, when the *Ispravnik* would arrive.

'In that case,' said Olga, 'I should prefer to return some other time.'

But the police officer declared that she must continue to wait in the antechamber of the office, for such were the orders of the *Ispravnik*. There could be no doubt that all this was a disgraceful attempt to provoke her, and Olga, who was of a very irascible disposition, replied with some observations not of the most respectful character, and not particularly flattering to the *Ispravnik* or his deputy.

'Oh! that's how you treat the representatives of the Government in the exercise of their functions, is it?' exclaimed the deputy, as though prepared for this. And he immediately called in another policeman as a witness, and drew up a statement of the charge against her.

Olga went away. But proceedings were taken against her before the district judge, the very man whom she had cured of *delirium tremens*, who sentenced her to three days' solitary confinement. It was confinement in a dark, fetid hole, full of filth and vermin.

Merely in entering it, she was overcome with disgust. When she was released, she seemed to have passed through a serious illness. It was not, however, the physical sufferings she had undergone so much as the humiliation she had endured which chafed her proud disposition.

From that time she became gloomy, taciturn, abrupt. She spent whole days shut up in her room, without seeing anybody, or wandered away from the town into the neighbouring wood, and avoided people. She was evidently planning something. Among the worthy citizens of Talutorovsk, who had a compassionate feeling towards her, some said one thing, some another, but no

one foresaw such a tragic ending as that of which rumours ran on July 27.

In the morning the landlady entered her room and found it empty. The bed, undisturbed, clearly showed that she had not slept in it. She had disappeared. The first idea which flashed through the mind of the old dame was that Olga had escaped, and she ran in all haste to inform the *Ispravnik*, fearing that any delay would be considered as a proof of complicity.

The *Ispravnik* did not lose a moment. Olga Liubatovitch being one of the most seriously compromised women, he feared the severest censure, perhaps even dismissal, for his want of vigilance. He immediately hastened to the spot in order to discover if possible the direction the fugitive had taken. But directly he entered the room he found upon the table two letters signed and sealed, one addressed to the authorities, the other to the sister of Olga, Vera Liubatovitch, who had also been banished to another Siberian town. These letters were immediately opened by the *Ispravnik*, and they revealed the mournful fact that the young girl had not taken to flight, but had committed suicide. In the letter addressed to the authorities she said, in a few lines, that she died by her own hand, and begged that nobody might be blamed. To her sister she wrote more fully, explaining that her life of continuous annoyance, of inactivity, and of gradual wasting away, which is the life of a political prisoner in Siberia, had become hateful to her, that she could no longer endure it, and preferred to drown herself in the Tobol. She finished by affectionately begging her sister to forgive her for the grief she might cause her and her friends and companions in misfortune.

Without wasting a moment, the *Ispravnik* hastened to the Tobol, and there he found the confirmation of the revelation of Olga. Parts of her dress dangled upon the bushes, under which lay her bonnet, lapped by the rippling water. Some peasants said that on the previous day they had seen the young girl wandering on the bank with a gloomy and melancholy aspect, looking fixedly at the turbid waters of the river. The *Ispravnik*, through whose hands all the correspondence passed of the political prisoners banished to his district, recalled certain expressions and remarks that had struck him in the last letters of Olga Liubatovitch, the meaning of which now became clear.

There could no longer be any doubt. The *Ispravnik* sent for all the fishermen near, and began to drag the river with poles, cast-

ing in nets to recover the body. This, however, led to nothing. Nor was it surprising: the broad river was so rapid that in a single night it must have carried a body away—who knows how many leagues? For three days the *Ispravnik* continued his efforts, and stubbornly endeavoured to make the river surrender its prey. But at last, after having worn out all his people and broken several nets against the stones and old trunks which the river mocked him with, he had to give up the attempt as unavailing.

## II.

The body of Olga, her heart within it throbbing with joy and uncertainty, had meanwhile been hurried away, not by the yellow waters of the Tobol, but by a vehicle drawn by two horses galloping at full speed.

Having made arrangements with a young rustic whom, in her visits to the neighbouring cottages in a medical capacity, she had succeeded in converting to Socialism, Olga disposed everything so as to make it be believed that she had drowned herself, and on the night fixed secretly left her house and proceeded to the neighbouring forest, where, at a place agreed upon, her young disciple was awaiting her. The night was dark. Beneath the thick foliage of that virgin forest nothing could be seen, nothing could be heard but the hootings of the owls, and sometimes, brought from afar, the howling of the wolves, which infest the whole of Siberia.

As an indispensable precaution, the meeting-place was fixed at a distance of about three miles, in the interior of the forest. Olga had to traverse this distance in utter darkness, guided only by the stars, which occasionally pierced through the dense foliage. She was not afraid, however, of the wild beasts, or of the highwaymen and vagrants who are always prowling round the towns in Siberia. It was the cemetery-keeper's dog she was afraid of. The cemeteries are always well looked after in that country, for among the horrible crimes committed by the scum of the convicts one of the most common is that of disinterring and robbing the newly buried dead. Now the keeper of the cemetery of Talutorovsk was not to be trifled with; his dog still less so. It was a mastiff, as big as a calf, ferocious and vigilant, and could hear the approach of any one a quarter of a mile off. Meanwhile the road passed close to the cottage of the solitary keeper. It was precisely

for the purpose of avoiding it that Olga, instead of following the road, had plunged into the forest, notwithstanding the great danger of losing her way.

Stumbling at every step against the roots and old fallen trunks, pricked by the thorny bushes, her face lashed by boughs elastic as though moved by springs, she kept on for two hours with extreme fatigue, sustained only by the hope that she would shortly reach the place of meeting, which could not be far off. At last, indeed, the darkness began to diminish somewhat and the trees to become thinner, and a moment afterwards she entered upon open ground. She suddenly stopped, looked around, her blood freezing with terror, and recognised the keeper's cottage. She had lost her way in the forest, and, after so many windings, had gone straight to the point she wished to avoid.

Her first impulse was to run away as fast as her remaining strength would enable her, but a moment afterwards a thought flashed through her mind which restrained her. No sound came from the cottage; all was silent. What could this indicate but the absence of the occupant? She stood still and listened, holding her breath. In the cottage not a sound could be heard, but in another direction she heard, in the silence of the night, the distant barking of a dog, which seemed, however, to be approaching nearer. Evidently the keeper had gone out, but at any moment might return, and his terrible dog was perhaps running in front of him, as though in search of prey. Fortunately from the keeper's house to the place of appointment there was a path which the fugitive had no need to avoid, and she set off and ran as fast as the fear of being seized and bitten by the ferocious animal would allow her. The barking, indeed, drew nearer, but so dense was the forest that not even a dog could penetrate it. Olga soon succeeded in reaching the open ground, breathless, harassed by the fear of being followed and the doubt that she might not find any one at the place of appointment. Great was her delight when she saw in the darkness the expected vehicle, and recognised the young peasant.

To leap into the vehicle and to hurry away was the work of an instant. In rather more than five hours of hard driving they reached Tumen, a town of about 18,000 inhabitants, fifty miles distant from Talutorovsk. A few hundred yards from the outskirts the vehicle turned into a dark lane and very quietly approached a house where it was evidently expected. In a window

on the first floor a light was lit, and the figure of a man appeared. Then the window was opened, and the man, having recognised the young girl, exchanged a few words in a low tone with the peasant who was acting as driver. The latter, without a word, rose from his seat, took the young girl in his arms, for she was small and light, and passed her on like a baby into the robust hands of the man, who introduced her into his room. It was the simplest and safest means of entering unobserved. To have opened the door at such an unusual hour would have awakened people, and caused gossip.

The peasant went his way, wishing the young girl all success, and Olga was at last able to take a few hours' rest. Her first step had succeeded. All difficulties were far indeed, however, from being overcome; for in Siberia it is not so much walls and keepers as immeasurable distance which is the real gaoler.

In this area, twice as large as all Europe, and with a total population only twice that of the English capital, towns and villages are only imperceptible points, separated by immense deserts absolutely uninhabitable, in which if any one ventured he would die of hunger, or be devoured by wolves. The fugitive thus has no choice, and must take one of the few routes which connect the towns with the rest of the world. Pursuit is therefore extremely easy, and thus, while the number of the fugitives from the best-guarded prisons and mines amounts to hundreds among the political prisoners, and to thousands among the common offenders, those who succeed in overcoming all difficulties and in escaping from Siberia itself may be counted on the fingers.

There are two means of effecting an escape. The first, which is very hazardous, is that of profiting, in order to get a good start, by the first few days, when the police furiously scour their own district only, without giving information of the escape to the great centres, in the hope, which is often realised, of informing their superiors of the escape and capture of the prisoner at the same time. In the most favourable cases, however, the fugitive gains only three or four days of time, while the entire journey lasts many weeks, and sometimes many months. With the telegraph established along all the principal lines of communication, and even with mere horse patrols, the police have no difficulty whatever in making up for lost time, and exceptional cleverness or good fortune is necessary in order to keep out of their clutches. But this method, as being the simplest and comparatively easy,

as it requires few preparations and but little external assistance, is adopted by the immense majority of the fugitives, and it is precisely for this reason that ninety-nine per cent. of them only succeed in reaching a distance of one or two hundred miles from the place of their confinement.

Travelling being so dangerous, the second mode is much more safe—that of remaining hidden in some place of concealment, carefully prepared beforehand, in the province itself, for one, two, three, six months, until the police, after having carried on the chase so long in vain, come to the conclusion that the fugitive must be beyond the frontiers of Siberia, and slacken or entirely cease their vigilance. This was the plan followed in the famous escape of Lopatin, who remained more than a month at Irkutsk, and of Debagorio Mokrievitch, who spent more than a year in various places in Siberia before undertaking his journey to Russia.

Olga Liubatovitch did not wish, however, to have recourse to the latter expedient, and selected the former. It was a leap in the dark. But she built her hopes upon the success of the little stratagem of her supposed suicide, and the very day after her arrival at Tumen she set out towards Europe by the postal and caravan road to Moscow.

To journey by post in Russia, a travelling passport (*podorojna*) must be obtained, signed by the governor. Olga certainly had none, and could not lose time in procuring one. She had, therefore, to find somebody in possession of this indispensable document whom she could accompany. As luck would have it, a certain Soluzeff, who had rendered himself famous a few years before by certain forgeries and malversations on a grand scale, had been pardoned by the Emperor and was returning to Russia. He willingly accepted the company of a pretty countrywoman, as Olga represented herself to him to be, who was desirous of going to Kazan, where her husband was lying seriously ill, and consented to pay her share of the travelling expenses. But here another trouble arose. This Soluzeff, being on very good terms with the gendarmes and the police, a whole army of them accompanied him to the post-station. Now Olga had begun her revolutionary career at sixteen, she was arrested for the first time at seventeen, and during the seven years of that career had been in eleven prisons, and had passed some few months in that of Tumen itself. It was little short of a miracle that no one recognised the celebrated Liubatovitch in the humble travelling companion of their common friend.



At last, however, the vehicle set out amid the shouts and cheers of the company. Olga breathed more freely. Her tribulations were not, however, at an end.

I need not relate the various incidents of her long journey. Her companion worried her. He was a man whom long indulgence in luxury had rendered effeminate, and at every station said he was utterly worn out, and stopped to rest himself and take some tea with biscuits, preserves, and sweets, an abundance of which he carried with him. Olga, who was in agonies, as her deception might be found out at any moment, and telegrams describing her be sent to all the post-stations of the line, had to display much cunning and firmness to keep this poltroon moving on without arousing suspicions respecting herself. When, however, near the frontier of European Russia, she was within an ace of betraying herself. Soluzeff declared that he was incapable of going any farther, that he was thoroughly knocked up by this feverish hurry-skurry, and must stop a few days to recover himself. Olga had some thought of disclosing everything, hoping to obtain from his generosity what she could not obtain from his sluggish selfishness. There is no telling what might have happened if a certain instinct, which never left Olga even when she was most excited, had not preserved her from this very dangerous step.

A greater danger awaited her at Kazan. No sooner had she arrived than she hastened away to take her ticket by the first steamboat going up the Volga towards Nijni-Novgorod. Soluzeff, who said he was going south, would take the opposite direction. Great, therefore, was her surprise and bewilderment when she saw her travelling companion upon the same steamer. She did everything she could to avoid him, but in vain. Soluzeff recognised her, and, advancing towards her, exclaimed in a loud voice :—

‘What! you here? Why, you told me your husband was lying ill in the Kazan Hospital.’

Some of the passengers turned round and looked, and among them the gendarme who was upon the boat. The danger was serious. But Olga, without losing her self-possession, at once invented a complete explanation of the unexpected change in her itinerary. Soluzeff took it all in, as did the gendarme who was listening.

At Moscow she was well known, having spent several months in its various prisons. Not caring to go to the central station, which is always full of gendarmes on duty, she was compelled to

walk several leagues, to economise her small stock of money, and take the train at a small station, passing the night in the open air.

Many were the perils from which, thanks to her cleverness, she escaped. But her greatest troubles awaited her in the city she so ardently desired to reach, St. Petersburg.

When a Nihilist, after a rather long absence, suddenly reaches some city without previously conferring with those who have been there recently, his position is a very singular one. Although he may know he is in the midst of friends and old companions in arms, he is absolutely incapable of finding any of them. Being 'illegal' people, or outlaws, they live with false passports, and are frequently compelled to change their names and their places of abode. To inquire for them under their old names is not to be thought of, for these continuous changes are not made for mere amusement, but from the necessity, constantly recurring, of escaping from some imminent danger, more or less grave. To go to the old residence of a Nihilist and ask for him under his old name would be voluntarily putting one's head into the lion's mouth.

Under such circumstances, a Nihilist is put to no end of trouble, and has to wander hither and thither in order to find his friends. He applies to old acquaintances among people who are 'legal' and peaceful—that is to say, officials, business men, barristers, doctors, &c., who form an intermediate class, unconsciously connecting the most active Nihilists with those who take the least interest in public affairs. In this class there are people of all ranks. Some secretly aid the Nihilists more or less energetically. Others receive them into their houses, simply as friends, without having any 'serious' business with them. Others, again, see them only casually, but know from whom more or less accurate information is to be obtained; and so on. All these people being unconnected with the movement, or almost so, run little risk of being arrested, and living as they do 'legally'—that is to say, under their own names—they are easy to be found, and supply the Ariadne's thread which enables any one to penetrate into the Nihilist labyrinth who has not had time, or who has been unable, to obtain the addresses of the affiliated.

Having reached St. Petersburg, Olga Liubatovitch was precisely in this position. But to find the clue in such cases is easy only to those who, having long resided in the city, have many connections in society. Olga had never stayed more than a few

days in the capital. Her acquaintances among 'legal' people were very few in number, and then she had reached St. Petersburg in the month of August, when every one of position is out of town. With only sixty kopecks in her pocket, for in her great haste she had been unable to obtain a sufficient sum of money, she dragged her limbs from one extremity of the capital to the other. She might have dropped in the street from sheer exhaustion, and been taken up by the police as a mere vagabond, had not the idea occurred to her to call upon a distant relative whom she knew to be in St. Petersburg. She was an old maid, who affectionately welcomed her to the house, although, at the mere sight of Olga, her hair stood on end. She remained there two days; but the fear of the poor lady was so extreme that Olga did not care to stay longer. Supplied with a couple of roubles, she recommenced her pilgrimage, and at last met a barrister who, as luck would have it, had come up that day from the country on business.

From that moment all her tribulations ended. The barrister, who had known her previously, placed his house at her disposal, and immediately communicated the news of her arrival to some friends of his among the affiliated. The next day the good news spread throughout all St. Petersburg of the safe arrival of Olga Liubatovitch.

She was immediately supplied with money and a passport, and taken to a safe place of concealment, secure against police scrutiny.

### III.

It was at St. Petersburg that I first met her.

It was not at a 'business' gathering, but one of mere pleasure, in a family. With the 'legal' and the 'illegal' there must have been about fifteen persons. Among those present were some literary men. One of them was a singular example of an 'illegal' man, much sought for at one time, who, living for six or seven years with false passports, almost succeeded in legalising himself, as a valuable and well-known contributor to various newspapers. There was a barrister who, after having defended others in several political trials, at last found himself in the prisoner's dock. There was a young man of eighteen in gold lace and military epaulettes, who was the son of one of the most furious persecutors of the Revolutionary party. There was an official of about fifty, the head of a department in one of the ministries, who, for five years running,

was our Keeper of the Seals—who kept, that is to say, a large chest full to the brim of seals, false marks, stamps, &c., manufactured by his niece, a charming young lady, very clever in draughtsmanship and engraving. It was a very mixed company, and strange for any one not accustomed to the singular habits of the Palmyra of the North.

With the freedom characteristic of all Russian gatherings, especially those of the Nihilists, every one did as he liked and talked with those who pleased him. The company was split up into various groups, and the murmur of voices filled the room and frequently rose above the exclamations and laughter.

Having saluted the hosts and shaken hands with some friends, I joined one of these little groups.

I had no difficulty in recognising Olga Liubatovitch, for the portraits of the principal prisoners in the trial of the 'fifty,' of whom she was one of the most distinguished figures, circulated by thousands, and were in every hand.

She was seated at the end of the sofa, and, with her head bent, was slowly sipping a cup of tea. Her thick black hair, of which she had an abundance, hung over her shoulders, the ends touching the bottom of the sofa. When she rose it almost reached to her knees. The colour of her face, a golden brown, like that of the Spaniards, proclaimed her Southern origin, her father and grandfather having been political refugees from Montenegro who had settled in Russia. There was nothing Russian, in fact, in any feature of her face. With her large and black eyebrows, shaped like a sickle as though she kept them always raised, there was something haughty and daring about her, which struck one at first sight, and gave her the appearance of the women belonging to her native land. From her new country she had derived, however, a pair of blue eyes, which always appeared half-closed by their long lashes, and cast flitting shadows upon her soft cheeks when she moved her eyelids, and a lithe, delicate, and rather slim figure, which somewhat relieved the severe and rigid expression of her face. She had, too, a certain unconscious charm, slightly statuesque, which is often met with among women from the South.

Gazing at this stately face, to which a regular nose with wide nostrils gave a somewhat aquiline shape, I thought that this was precisely what Olga Liubatovitch ought to be as I had pictured her from the account of her adventures. But on a sudden she

smiled, and I no longer recognised her. She smiled, not only with the full vermilion lips of a brunette, but also with her blue eyes, with her rounded cheeks, with every muscle of her face, which was suddenly lit up and irradiated like that of a child.

When she laughed heartily she closed her eyes, bashfully bent her head, and covered her mouth with her hand or her arm, exactly as our shy country lasses do. On a sudden, however, she composed herself, and her face darkened and became gloomy, serious, almost stern, as before.

I had a great desire to hear her voice, in order to learn whether it corresponded with either of the two natures revealed by these sudden changes. But I had no opportunity of gratifying this desire. Olga did not open her mouth the whole evening. Her taciturnity did not proceed from indifference, for she listened attentively to the conversation, and her veiled eyes were turned from side to side. It did not seem, either, to arise from restraint. It was due rather to the absence of any motive for speaking. She seemed to be quite content to listen and reflect, and her serious mouth appeared to defy all attempts to open it.

It was not until some days afterwards, when I met her alone on certain 'business,' that I heard her voice, veiled like her eyes, and it was only after many months' acquaintance that I was able to understand her disposition, the originality of which consisted in its union of two opposite characteristics. She was a child in her candour, bordering on simplicity, in the purity of her mind, and in the modesty which displayed itself even in familiar intercourse and gave to her sentiments a peculiar and charming delicacy. But at the same time this child astounded the toughest veterans by her determination, her ability and coolness in the face of danger, and especially by her ardent and steadfast strength of will, which, recognising no obstacles, made her sometimes attempt impossibilities.

To see this young girl, so simple, so quiet, and so modest, who became burning red, bashfully covered her face with both hands, and hurried away upon hearing some poetry dedicated to her by some former disciple—to see this young girl, I say, it was difficult to believe that she was an escaped convict, familiar with condemnations, prisons, trials, escapés, and adventures of every kind. It was only necessary, however, to see her for once at work to believe instantly in everything. She was transformed, displaying a certain natural and spontaneous instinct which was something

between the cunning of a fox and the skill of a warrior. This outward simplicity and candour served her then like the shield of Mambrino, and enabled her to issue unscathed from perils in which many men, considered able, would unquestionably have lost their lives.

One day the police, while making a search, really had her in their grasp. A friend, distancing the gendarmes by a few moments, had merely only time to rush breathless up the stairs, dash into the room where she was, and exclaim, 'Save yourself! the police!' when the police were already surrounding the house. Olga had not even time to put on her bonnet. Just as she was, she rushed to the back stairs, and hurried down at full speed. Fortunately the street door was not yet guarded by the gendarmes, and she was able to enter a little shop on the ground floor. She had only twenty kopecks in her pocket, having been unable, in her haste, to get any money. But this did not trouble her. For fifteen kopecks she bought a cotton handkerchief, and fastened it round her head in the style adopted by coquettish servant-girls. With the five kopecks remaining she bought some nuts, and left the shop eating them, in such a quiet and innocent manner that the detachment of police, which meanwhile had advanced and surrounded the house on that side, let her pass without even asking her who she was, although the description of her was well known, for her photograph had been distributed to all the agents, and the police have always strict orders to let no one who may arouse the slightest suspicion leave a house which they have surrounded. This was not the only time that she slipped like an eel through the fingers of the police. She was inexhaustible in expedients, in stratagems, and in cunning, which she always had at her command at such times; and with all this she maintained her serious and severe aspect, so that she seemed utterly incapable of lending herself to deceit or simulation. Perhaps she did not think, but acted upon instinct rather than reflection, and that was why she could meet every danger with the lightning-like rapidity of a fencer who parries a thrust.

#### IV.

The romance of her life commenced during her stay in St. Petersburg after her escape. She was one of the so-called 'Amazons,' and was one of the most fanatical. She ardently

preached against love and advocated celibacy, holding that with so many young men and young girls of the present day love was a clog upon revolutionary activity. She kept her vow for several years, but was vanquished by the invincible. There was at that time in St. Petersburg a certain Nicholas Morosoff, a young poet and brave fellow, handsome, and fascinating as his poetic dreams. He was of a graceful figure, tall as a young pine-tree, with a fine head, an abundance of curly hair, and a pair of chestnut eyes, which soothed, like a whisper of love, and sent forth glances that shone like diamonds in the dark whenever a touch of enthusiasm moved him.

The bold 'Amazon' and the young poet met, and their fate was decided. I will not tell of the delirium and transports through which they passed. Their love was like some delicate and sensitive plant, which must not be rudely touched. It was a spontaneous and irresistible feeling. They did not perceive it until they were madly enamoured of each other. They became husband and wife. It was said of them that when they were together inexorable Fate had no heart to touch them, and that its cruel hand became a paternal one, which warded off the blows that threatened them. And, indeed, all their misfortunes happened to them when they were apart.

This was the incident which did much to give rise to the saying.

In November 1879 Olga fell into the hands of the police. It should be explained that when these succeed in arresting a Nihilist they always leave in the apartments of the captured person a few men to take into custody any one who may come to see that person. In our language, this is called a trap. Owing to the Russian habit of arranging everything at home and not in the cafés, as in Europe, the Nihilists are often compelled to go to each other's houses, and thus these traps become fatal. In order to diminish the risk, safety signals are generally placed in the windows, and are taken away at the first sound of the police. But, owing to the negligence of the Nihilists themselves, accustomed as they are to danger, and so occupied that they sometimes have not time to eat a mouthful all day long, the absence of these signals is often disregarded, or attributed to some combination of circumstances—the difficulty, or perhaps the topographical impossibility, of placing signals in many apartments in such a manner that they can be seen from a distance. This measure of public



security frequently, therefore, does not answer its purpose, and a good half of all the Nihilists who have fallen into the hands of the Government have been caught in these very traps.

A precisely similar misfortune happened to Olga, and the worst of it was that it was in the house of Alexander Kviatkovsky, one of the Terrorist leaders, where the police found a perfect magazine of dynamite, bombs, and similar things, together with a plan of the Winter Palace, which, after the explosion there, led to his capital conviction. As may readily be believed, the police would regard with anything but favourable eyes every one who came to the house of such a man.

Directly she entered, Olga was immediately seized by two policemen, in order to prevent her from defending herself. She, however, displayed not the slightest desire to do so. She feigned surprise, astonishment, and invented there and then the story that she had come to see some dressmakers (who had, in fact, their names on a door-plate below, and occupied the upper floor) for the purpose of ordering something, but had mistaken the door; that she did not know what they wanted with her, and wished to return to her husband, etc.; the usual subterfuges to which the police are accustomed to turn a deaf ear. But Olga played her part so well that the *pristav*, or head of the police of the district, was really inclined to believe her. He told her that anyhow, if she did not wish to be immediately taken to prison, she must give her name and conduct him to her own house. Olga gave the first name which came into her mind, which naturally enough was not that under which she was residing in the capital, but as to her place of residence she declared, with every demonstration of profound despair, that she could not, and would not, take him there or say where it was. The *pristav* insisted, and, upon her reiterated refusal, observed to the poor simple thing that her obstinacy was not only prejudicial to her, but even useless, as, knowing her name, he would have no difficulty in sending some one to the Adressni Stol and obtaining her address. Struck by this unanswerable argument, Olga said she would take him to her house.

No sooner had she descended into the street, accompanied by the *pristav* and some of his subalterns, than Olga met a friend, Madame Maria A., who was going to Kviatkovsky's, where a meeting of Terrorists had actually been fixed for that very day. It was to this chance meeting that the Terrorists owed their

escape from the very grave danger which threatened them ; for the windows of Kviatkovsky's rooms were so placed that it was impossible to see any signals there from the street.

Naturally enough the two friends made no sign to indicate that they were acquainted with each other, but Madame Maria A., on seeing Olga with the police, ran in all haste to inform her friends of the arrest of their companion, about which there could be no doubt.

The first to be warned was Nicholas Morosoff, as the police in a short time would undoubtedly go to his house and make the customary search. Olga felt certain that this was precisely what her friend would do, and therefore her sole object now was to delay her custodians so as to give Morosoff time to 'clear' his rooms (that is to say, destroy or take away papers and everything compromising), and to get away himself. It was this that she was anxious about, for he had been accused by the traitor Goldenberg of having taken part in the mining work connected with the Moscow attempt, and by the Russian law was liable to the penalty of death.

Greatly emboldened by this lucky meeting with her friend, Olga, without saying a word, conducted the police to the Ismailovsky Polk, one of the quarters of the town most remote from the place of her arrest, which was in the Nevsky district. They found the street and the house indicated to them. They entered and summoned the *dvornik* (doorkeeper), who has to be present at every search made. Then came the inevitable explanation. The *dvornik* said that he did not know the lady, and that she did not lodge in that house.

Upon hearing this statement, Olga covered her face with her hands, and again gave way to despair. She sobbingly admitted that she had deceived them from fear of her husband, who was very harsh, that she had not given her real name and address, and wound up by begging them to let her go home.

'What's the use of all this, madam?' exclaimed the *pristav*. 'Don't you see that you are doing yourself harm by these tricks? I'll forgive you this time, because of your inexperience, but take care you don't do it again, and lead us at once to your house, or otherwise you will repent it.'

After much hesitation, Olga resolved to obey the injunctions of the *pristav*. She gave her name, and said she lived in one of the lines of the Vasili Ostrov.

It took an hour to reach the place. At last they arrived at the house indicated. Here precisely the same scene with the *dvornik* was repeated. Then the *pristav* lost all patience, and wanted to take her away to prison at once, without making a search in her house. Upon hearing the *pristav*'s harsh announcement, Olga flung herself into an arm-chair and had a violent attack of hysterics. They fetched some water and sprinkled her face with it to revive her. When she had somewhat recovered, the *pristav* ordered her to rise and go at once to the prison of the district. Her hysterical attack recommenced. But the *pristav* would stand no more nonsense, and told her to get up, or otherwise he would have her taken away in a cab by main force.

The despair of the poor lady was now at its height.

'Listen!' she exclaimed. 'I will tell you everything now.'

And she began the story of her life and marriage. She was the daughter of a rustic, and she named the province and the village. Up to the age of sixteen she remained with her father and looked after the sheep. But one day an engineer, her future husband, who was at work upon a branch line of railway, came to stop in the house. He fell in love with her, took her to town, placed her with his aunt, and had teachers to educate her, as she was illiterate and knew nothing. Then he married her, and they lived very happily together for four years; but he had since become discontented, rough, irritable, and she feared that he loved her no longer; but she loved him as much as ever, as she owed everything to him, and could not be ungrateful. Then she said that he would be dreadfully angry with her, and would perhaps drive her away if she went to the house in charge of the police; that it would be a scandal; that he would think she had stolen something; and so on.

All this, and much more of the same kind, with endless details and repetitions, did Olga narrate; interrupting her story from time to time by sighs, exclamations, and tears. She wept in very truth, and her tears fell copiously, as she assured me when she laughingly described this scene to me afterwards. I thought at the time that she would have made a very good actress.

The *pristav*, though impatient, continued to listen. He was vexed at the idea of returning with empty hands, and he hoped this time at all events her story would lead to something. Then, too, he had not the slightest suspicion, and would have taken his oath that the woman he had arrested was a poor simple

creature, who had fallen into his hands without having done anything whatever, as so frequently happens in Russia, where houses are searched on the slightest suspicion. When Olga had finished her story the *pristav* began to console her. He said that her husband would certainly pardon her when he heard her explanation; that the same thing might happen to any one; and so on. Olga resisted for a while, and asked the *pristav* to promise that he would assure her husband she had done nothing wrong; and more to the same effect. The *pristav* promised everything, in order to bring the matter to an end, and this time Olga proceeded towards her real residence. She had gained three hours and a half; for her arrest took place at about two o'clock, and she did not reach her own home until about half past five. She had no doubt that Morosoff had got away, and after having 'cleared' the rooms had thrice as much time as he required for the operation.

Having ascended the stairs, accompanied by the *dvorniks* and the police, she rang the bell. The door opened and the party entered, first the antechamber, then the sitting-room. There a terrible surprise awaited her. Morosoff in person was seated at a table, in his dressing-gown, with a pencil in his hand and a pen in his ear. Olga fell into hysterics. This time they were real, not simulated.

How was it that he had remained in the house?

The lady previously mentioned had not failed to hasten at once and inform Morosoff, whom she found at home with three or four friends. At the announcement of the arrest of Olga they all had but one idea—that of remaining where they were, of arming themselves, and of awaiting her arrival, in order to rescue her by main force. But Morosoff energetically opposed this proposal. He said, and rightly said, that it presented more dangers than advantages, for the police being in numbers and reinforced by the *dvorniks* of the house, who are all a species of police agents of inferior grade, the attempt at the best would result in the liberation of one person at the cost of several others. His view prevailed, and the plan, which was more generous than prudent, was abandoned. The rooms were at once 'cleared' with the utmost rapidity, so that the fate of the person arrested, which was sure to be a hard one and was now inevitable, should not be rendered more grievous. When all was ready and they were about to leave, Morosoff staggered his friends by acquainting them with the plan he had thought of. He would remain in the house alone and

await the arrival of the police. They thought he had lost his senses; for everybody knew, and no one better than himself, that, with the terrible accusation hanging over his head, if once arrested it would be all over with him. But he said he hoped it would not come to that—nay, he expected to get clear off with Olga, and in any case would share her fate. They would escape or perish together. His friends heard him announce this determination with mingled feelings of grief, astonishment, and admiration. Neither entreaties nor remonstrances could shake his determination. He was firm, and remained at home after saying farewell to his friends, who took leave of him as of a man on the point of death.

He had drawn up his plan, which by the suggestion of some mysterious instinct perfectly harmonised with that of Olga, although they had never in any way arranged the matter. He also had determined to feign innocence, and had arranged everything in such a manner as to make it seem as though he were the most peaceful of citizens. As he lived under the false passport of an engineer, he covered his table with a heap of plans of various dimensions, and, having put on his dressing-gown and slippers, set diligently to work to copy one, while waiting the arrival of his unwelcome guests.

It was in this guise and engaged in this innocent occupation that he was surprised by the police. The scene which followed may easily be imagined. Olga flung her arms round his neck, and poured forth a stream of broken words, exclamations, excuses, and complaints of these men who had arrested her because she wished to call upon her milliner. In the midst, however, of these exclamations, she whispered in his ear, 'Have you not been warned?'

'Yes,' he replied in the same manner, 'everything is in order. Don't be alarmed.'

Meanwhile he played the part of an affectionate husband mortified by this scandal. After a little scolding and then a little consolation, he turned to the *pristav* and asked him for an explanation, as he could not quite understand what had happened from the disconnected words of his wife. The *pristav* politely told the whole story. The engineer appeared greatly surprised and grieved, and could not refrain from somewhat bitterly censuring his wife for her unpardonable imprudence. The *pristav*, who was evidently reassured by the aspect of the husband and of the

whole household, declared nevertheless that he must make a search.

'I hope you will excuse me, sir,' he added, 'but I am obliged to do it; it is my duty.'

'I willingly submit to the law,' nobly replied the engineer.

Thereupon he pointed to the room, so as to indicate that the *pristav* was free to search it thoroughly, and having lit a candle with his own hand, for at that hour in St. Petersburg it was already dark, he quietly opened the door of the adjoining room, which was his own little place.

The search was made. Certainly not a single scrap of paper was found, written or printed, which smelt of Nihilism.

'By rights I ought to take the lady to prison,' said the *pristav*, when he had finished his search, 'especially as her previous behaviour was anything but what it ought to have been; but I won't do that. I will simply keep you under arrest here until your passports have been verified. You see, sir,' he added, 'we police officers are not quite so bad as the Nihilists make us out.'

'There are always honest men in every occupation,' replied the engineer with a gracious bow.

More compliments of the same kind, which I need not repeat, were exchanged between them, and the *pristav* went away with most of his men, well impressed with such a polite and pleasant reception. He left, however, a guard in the kitchen, with strict injunctions not to lose sight of the host and hostess, until further orders.

Morosoff and Olga were alone. The first act of the comedy they had improvised had met with complete success. But the storm was far from having blown over. The verification of their passports would show that they were false. The inevitable consequence would be a warrant for their arrest, which might be issued at any moment if the verification were made by means of the telegraph. The sentinel, rigid, motionless, with his sword by his side and his revolver in his belt, was seated in the kitchen, which was at the back, exactly opposite the outer door, so that it was impossible to approach the door without being seen by him. For several hours they racked their brains and discussed, in a low voice, various plans of escape. To free themselves by main force was not to be thought of. No arms had been left in the place, for they had been purposely taken away. Yet without weapons, how could they grapple with this big, sturdy fellow, armed as he

was? They hoped that as the hours passed on he would fall asleep. But this hope was not realised. When, at about half-past ten, Morosoff, under the pretext of going into his little room, which was used for various domestic purposes, passed near the kitchen, he saw the man still at his post, with his eyes wide open, attentive and vigilant as at first. Yet when Morosoff returned Olga would have declared that the way was quite clear and that they had nothing to do but to leave, so beaming were his eyes. He had, in fact, found what he wanted—a plan simple and safe. The little room opened into the small corridor which served as a sort of antechamber, and its door flanked that of the kitchen. In returning to the sitting-room, Morosoff observed that when the door of the little room was wide open, it completely shut out the view of the kitchen, and consequently hid from the policeman the outer door, and also that of the sitting-room. It would be possible, therefore, at a given moment, to pass through the antechamber without being seen by the sentinel. But this could not be done unless some one came and opened the door of the little room. Neither Olga nor Morosoff could do this, for if, under some pretext, they opened it, they would of course have to leave it open. This would immediately arouse suspicion, and the policeman would run after them and catch them perhaps before they had descended the staircase. Could they trust the landlady? The temptation to do so was great. If she consented to assist them, success might be considered certain. But if she refused! Who could guarantee that, from fear of being punished as an accomplice, she would not go and reveal everything to the police? Of course she did not suspect in the least what kind of people her lodgers were.

Nothing, therefore, was said to her, but they hoped nevertheless to have her unconscious assistance, and it was upon that Morosoff had based his plan. About eleven o'clock she went into the little room, where the pump was placed, to get the water to fill the kitchen cistern for next day's consumption. As the room was very small, she generally left one of the two pails in the corridor, while she filled the other with water, and, of course, was thus obliged to leave the door open. Everything thus depended upon the position in which she placed her pail. An inch or two on one side or the other would decide their fate; for it was only when the door of the little room was wide open that it shut out the view of the kitchen and concealed the end of the antechamber.



If not wide open, part of the outer door could be seen. There remained half an hour before the decisive moment, which both employed in preparing for flight. Their wraps were hanging up in the wardrobe in the antechamber. They had, therefore, to put on what they had with them in the sitting-room. Morosoff put on a light summer overcoat. Olga threw over her shoulders a woollen scarf, to protect her somewhat from the cold. In order to deaden as much as possible the sounds of their hasty footsteps, which might arouse the attention of the sentinel in the profound silence of the night, both of them put on their goloshes, which, being elastic, made but little noise. They had to put them on next to their stockings, although it was not particularly agreeable at that season, for they were in their slippers, their shoes having been purposely sent into the kitchen to be cleaned for the following day, in order to remove all suspicion respecting their intentions.

Everything being prepared, they remained in readiness, listening to every sound made by the landlady. At last came the clanging of the empty pails. She went to the little room, threw open the door, and began her work. The moment had arrived. Morosoff cast a hasty glance. Oh, horror! The empty pail scarcely projected beyond the threshold, and the door was at a very acute angle, so that even from the door of the sitting-room where they were part of the interior of the kitchen could be seen. He turned towards Olga, who was standing behind him holding her breath, and made an energetic sign in the negative. A few minutes passed, which seemed like hours. The pumping ceased; the pail was full. She was about to place it on the floor. Both stretched their necks and advanced a step, being unable to control the anxiety of their suspense. This time the heavy pail banged against the door and forced it back on its hinges, a stream of water being spilt. The view of the kitchen was completely shut out, but another disaster had occurred. Overbalanced by the heavy weight, the landlady had come half out into the corridor. 'She has seen us,' whispered Morosoff, falling back pale as death. 'No,' replied Olga, excitedly; and she was right. The landlady disappeared into the little room, and a moment afterwards recommenced her clattering work.

Without losing a moment, without even turning round, Morosoff gave the signal to his companion by a firm grip of the hand, and both issued forth, hastily passed through the corridor, softly opened

the door, and found themselves upon the landing of the staircase. With cautious steps they descended, and were in the street, ill-clad but very light of heart. A quarter of an hour afterwards they were in a house where they were being anxiously awaited by their friends, who welcomed them with a joy more easy to imagine than to describe.

In their own abode their flight was not discovered until late into the morning, when the landlady came to do the room.

Such was the adventure, narrated exactly as it happened, which contributed, as I have said, to give rise to the saying that these two were invincible when together. When the police became aware of the escape of the supposed engineer and his wife, they saw at once that they had been outwitted. The *pristav*, who had been so thoroughly taken in, had a terrible time of it, and proceeded with the utmost eagerness to make investigations somewhat behindhand. The verification of the passports of course showed that they were false. The two fugitives were therefore 'illegal' people, but the police wished to know, at all events, who they were, and to discover this was not very difficult, for both had already been in the hands of the police, who, therefore, were in possession of their photographs. The landlady and the *dvornik* recognised them among a hundred shown to them by the gendarmes. A comparison with the description of them, also preserved in the archives of the gendarmerie, left no doubt of their identity. It was in this manner the police found out what big fish they had stupidly allowed to escape from their net, as may be seen by reading the report of the trial of Sciriaeff and his companions. With extreme but somewhat tardy zeal, the gendarmes ransacked every place in search of them. They had their trouble for nothing. A Nihilist who thoroughly determines to conceal himself can never be found. He falls into the hands of the police only when he returns to active life.

When the search for them began to relax, Olga and Morosoff quitted their place of concealment and resumed their positions in the ranks. Some months afterwards they went abroad in order to legitimatise their union, so that if some day they were arrested it might be recognised by the police. They crossed the frontier of Roumania unmolested, stopped there some time, and having arranged their private affairs went to reside for awhile at Geneva, where Morosoff wished to finish a work of some length upon the Russian revolutionary movement. Here Olga gave birth to a daughter, and

for awhile it seemed that all the strength of her ardent and exceptional disposition would concentrate itself in maternal love. She did not appear to care for anything. She seemed even to forget her husband in her exclusive devotion to the little one. There was something almost wild in the intensity of her love.

Four months passed, and Morosoff, obeying the call of duty, chafing at inactivity, and eager for the struggle, returned to Russia. Olga could not follow him with her baby at the breast, and, oppressed by a mournful presentiment, allowed him to depart alone.

A fortnight after he was arrested.

On hearing this terrible news, Olga did not swoon, she did not wring her hands, she did not even shed a single tear. She stifled her grief. A single, irresistible, and supreme idea pervaded her—to fly to him; to save him at all costs; by money, by craft, by the dagger, by poison, even at the risk of her own life, so that she could but save him.

And the child? That poor little weak and delicate creature, who needed all her maternal care to support its feeble life? What could she do with the poor innocent babe, already almost an orphan?

She could not take it with her. She must leave it behind.

Terrible was the night which the poor mother passed with her child before setting out. Who can depict the indescribable anguish of her heart, with the horrible alternative placed before her of forsaking her child to save the man she loved, or of forsaking him to save the little one. On the one side was maternal feeling; on the other her ideal, her convictions, her devotion to the cause which he steadfastly served.

She did not hesitate for a moment. She must go.

On the morning of the day fixed she took leave of all her friends, shut herself up alone with her child, and remained with it for some minutes to bid it farewell. When she issued forth, her face was pale as death and wet with tears.

She set out. She moved heaven and earth to save her husband. Twenty times she was within an ace of being arrested. But it was impossible for her efforts to avail. As implicated in the attempt against the life of the Emperor, he was confined in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul; and there is no escape from there. She did not relax her efforts, but stubbornly and doggedly continued them, and all this while was in agony if she did not

constantly hear about her child. If the letters were delayed a day or two, her anguish could not be restrained. The child was ever present in her mind. One day she took compassion on a little puppy, still blind, which she found upon a heap of rubbish, where it had been thrown. 'My friends laugh at me,' she wrote, 'but I love it because its little feeble cries remind me of those of my child.'

Meanwhile the child died. For a whole month no one had the courage to tell the sad news. But at last the silence had to be broken.

Olga herself was arrested a few weeks afterwards.

Such is the story, the true story, of Olga Liubatovitch. Of Olga Liubatovitch, do I say? No—of hundreds and hundreds of others. I should not have related it had it not been so.

STEPNIAK.



## THUNDERBOLTS.

THE subject of thunderbolts is a very fascinating one, and all the more so because there are no such things in existence at all as thunderbolts of any sort. Like the snakes of Iceland, their whole history might, from the positive point of view at least, be summed up in the simple statement of their utter non-entity. But does that do away in the least, I should like to know, with their intrinsic interest and importance? Not a bit of it. It only adds to the mystery and charm of the whole subject. Does any one feel as keenly interested in any real living cobra or anaconda as in the non-existent great sea-serpent? Are ghosts and vampires less attractive objects of popular study than cats and donkeys? Can the present King of Abyssinia, interviewed by our own correspondent, equal the romantic charm of Prester John, or the butcher in the next street rival the personality of Sir Roger Charles Doughty Tichborne, Baronet? No, the real fact is this: if there *were* thunderbolts, the question of their nature and action would be a wholly dull, scientific, and priggish one; it is their unreality alone that invests them with all the mysterious weirdness of pure fiction. Lightning, now, is a common thing that one reads about wearily in the books on electricity, a mere ordinary matter of positive and negative, density and potential, to be measured in ohms (whatever they may be), and partially imitated with Leyden jars and red sealing-wax apparatus. Why, did not Benjamin Franklin, a fat old gentleman in ill-fitting small clothes, bring it down from the clouds with a simple door-key, somewhere near Philadelphia? and does not Mr. Robert Scott (of the Meteorological Office) calmly predict its probable occurrence within the next twenty-four hours in his daily report, as published regularly in the morning papers? This is lightning, mere vulgar lightning, a simple result of electrical conditions in the upper atmosphere, inconveniently connected with algebraical formulas in  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$ , with horrid symbols interspersed in Greek letters. But the real thunderbolts of Jove, the weapons that the angry Zeus, or Thor, or Indra hurls down upon the head of the trembling malefactor—how infinitely grander, more fearsome, and more mysterious!

And yet even nowadays, I believe, there are a large number of well-informed people, who have passed the sixth standard, taken prizes at the Oxford Local, and attended the dullest lectures of the Society for University Extension, but who nevertheless in some vague and dim corner of their consciousness retain somehow a lingering faith in the existence of thunderbolts. They have not yet grasped in its entirety the simple truth that lightning is the reality of which thunderbolts are the mythical or fanciful or verbal representation. We all of us know now that lightning is a mere flash of electric light and heat; that it has no solid existence or core of any sort; in short, that it is dynamical rather than material, a state or movement rather than a body or thing. To be sure, local newspapers still talk with much show of learning about 'the electric fluid' which did such remarkable damage last week upon the slated steeple of Peddington Torpida church; but the well-crammed schoolboy of the present day has long since learned that the electric fluid is an exploded fallacy, and that the lightning which pulled the ten slates off the steeple in question was nothing more in its real nature than a very big immaterial spark. However, the word thunderbolt has survived to us from the days when people still believed that the thing which did the damage during a thunderstorm was really and truly a gigantic white-hot bolt or arrow; and as there is a natural tendency in human nature to fit an existence to every word, people even now continue to imagine that there must be actually something or other somewhere called a thunderbolt. They don't figure this thing to themselves as being identical with the lightning; on the contrary, they seem to regard it as something infinitely rarer, more terrible, and more mystic; but they firmly hold that thunderbolts do exist in real life, and even sometimes assert that they themselves have positively seen them.

But if seeing is believing, it is equally true, as all who have looked into the phenomena of spiritualism and 'psychical research' (modern English for ghost-hunting) know too well, that believing is seeing also. The origin of the faith in thunderbolts must be looked for (like the origin of the faith in ghosts and 'psychical phenomena') far back in the history of our race. The noble savage, at that early period when wild in woods he ran, naturally noticed the existence of thunder and lightning, because thunder and lightning are things that forcibly obtrude themselves upon the attention of the observer, however little he may by nature be

scientifically inclined. Indeed, the noble savage, sleeping naked on the bare ground, in tropical countries where thunder occurs almost every night on an average, was sure to be pretty often awaked from his peaceful slumbers by the torrents of rain that habitually accompany thunderstorms in the happy realms of everlasting dog-days. Primitive man was thereupon compelled to do a little philosophising on his own account as to the cause and origin of the rumbling and flashing which he saw so constantly around him. Naturally enough, he concluded that the sound must be the voice of somebody; and that the fiery shaft, whose effects he sometimes noted upon trees, animals, and his fellow-man, must be the somebody's arrow. It is immaterial from this point of view whether, as the scientific anthropologists hold, he was led to his conception of these supernatural personages from his prior belief in ghosts and spirits, or whether, as Professor Max Müller will have it, he felt a deep yearning in his primitive savage breast toward the Infinite and the Unknowable (which he would doubtless have spelt, like the Professor, with a capital initial, had he been acquainted with the intricacies of the yet uninvented alphabet); but this much at least is pretty certain, that he looked upon the thunder and the lightning as in some sense the voice and the arrows of an aërial god.

Now, this idea about the arrows is itself very significant of the mental attitude of primitive man, and of the way that mental attitude has coloured all subsequent thinking and superstition upon this very subject. Curiously enough, to the present day the conception of the thunderbolt is essentially one of a *bolt*—that is to say, an arrow, or at least an arrowhead. All existing thunderbolts (and there are plenty of them lying about casually in country houses and local museums) are more or less arrow-like in shape and appearance; some of them, indeed, as we shall see by-and-by, are the actual stone arrowheads of primitive man himself in person. Of course the noble savage was himself in the constant habit of shooting at animals and enemies with a bow and arrow. When, then, he tried to figure to himself the angry god, seated in the storm-clouds, who spoke with such a loud rumbling voice, and killed those who displeased him with his fiery darts, he naturally thought of him as using in his cloudy home the familiar bow and arrow of this nether planet. To us nowadays, if we were to begin forming the idea for ourselves all over again *de novo*, it would be far more natural to think of the thunder as the noise of a big gun,



of the lightning as the flash of the powder, and of the supposed 'bolt' as a shell or bullet. There is really a ridiculous resemblance between a thunderstorm and a discharge of artillery. But the old conception derived from so many generations of primitive men has held its own against such mere modern devices as gunpowder and rifle balls; and none of the objects commonly shown as thunderbolts are ever round: they are distinguished, whatever their origin, by the common peculiarity that they more or less closely resemble a dart or arrowhead.

Let us begin, then, by clearly disembarassing our minds of any lingering belief in the existence of thunderbolts. There are absolutely no such things known to science. The two real phenomena that underlie the fable are simply thunder and lightning. A thunderstorm is merely a series of electrical discharges between one cloud and another, or between clouds and the earth; and these discharges manifest themselves to our senses under two forms—to the eye as lightning, to the ear as thunder. All that passes in each case is a huge spark—a commotion, not a material object. It is in principle just like the spark from an electrical machine; but while the most powerful machine of human construction will only send a spark for three feet, the enormous electrical apparatus provided for us by nature will send one for four, five, or even ten miles. Though lightning when it touches the earth always seems to us to come from the clouds to the ground, it is by no means certain that the real course may not at least occasionally be in the opposite direction. All we know is that sometimes there is an instantaneous discharge between one cloud and another, and sometimes an instantaneous discharge between a cloud and the earth.

But this idea of a mere passage of highly concentrated energy from one point to another was far too abstract, of course, for primitive man, and is far too abstract even now for nine out of ten of our fellow-creatures. Those who don't still believe in the bodily thunderbolt, a fearsome ærial weapon which buries itself deep in the bosom of the earth, look upon lightning as at least an embodiment of the electric fluid, a long spout or line of molten fire, which is usually conceived of as striking the ground and then proceeding to hide itself under the roots of a tree or beneath the foundations of a tottering house. Primitive man naturally took to the grosser and more material conception. He figured to himself the thunderbolt as a barbed arrowhead; and the forked zigzag

character of the visible flash, as it darts rapidly from point to point, seemed almost inevitably to suggest to him the barbs, as one sees them represented on all the Greek and Roman gems, in the red right hand of the angry Jupiter.

The thunderbolt being thus an accepted fact, it followed naturally that whenever any dart-like object of unknown origin was dug up out of the ground, it was at once set down as being a thunderbolt; and, on the other hand, the frequent occurrence of such dart-like objects, precisely where one might expect to find them in accordance with the theory, necessarily strengthened the belief itself. So commonly are thunderbolts picked up to the present day that to disbelieve in them seems to many country people a piece of ridiculous and stubborn scepticism. Why, they've ploughed up dozens of them themselves in their time, and just about the very place where the thunderbolt struck the old elm-tree two years ago, too.

The most favourite form of thunderbolt is the polished stone hatchet or 'celt' of the newer stone age men. I have never heard the very rude chipped and unpolished axes of the older drift men or cave men described as thunderbolts: they are too rough and shapeless ever to attract attention from any except professed archæologists. Indeed, the wicked have been known to scoff at them freely as mere accidental lumps of broken flint, and to deride the notion of their being due in any way to deliberate human handiwork. These are the sort of people who would regard a grand piano as a fortuitous concourse of atoms. But the shapely stone hatchet of the later neolithic farmer and herdsman is usually a beautifully polished wedge-shaped piece of solid greenstone; and its edge has been ground to such a delicate smoothness that it seems rather like a bit of nature's exquisite workmanship than a simple relic of prehistoric man. There is something very fascinating about the naïf belief that the neolithic axe is a genuine unadulterated thunderbolt. You dig it up in the ground exactly where you would expect a thunderbolt (if there were such things) to be. It is heavy, smooth, well shaped, and neatly pointed at one end. If it could really descend in a red-hot state from the depths of the sky, launched forth like a cannon-ball by some fierce discharge of heavenly artillery; it would certainly prove a very formidable weapon indeed; and one could easily imagine it scoring the bark of some aged oak, or tearing off the tiles from a projecting turret, exactly as the lightning is so well known to do.

in this prosaic workaday world of ours. In short, there is really nothing on earth against the theory of the stone axe being a true thunderbolt, except the fact that it unfortunately happens to be a neolithic hatchet.

But the course of reasoning by which we discover the true nature of the stone axe is not one that would in any case appeal strongly to the fancy or the intelligence of the British farmer. It is no use telling him that whenever one opens a barrow of the stone age one is pretty sure to find a neolithic axe and a few broken pieces of pottery beside the mouldering skeleton of the old nameless chief who lies there buried. The British farmer will doubtless stolidly retort that thunderbolts often strike the tops of hills, which are just the places where barrows and tumuli (tumps, he calls them) most do congregate; and that as to the skeleton, isn't it just as likely that the man was killed by the thunderbolt as that the thunderbolt was made by a man? Ay, and a sight likelier, too.

All the world over, this simple and easy belief, that the buried stone axe is a thunderbolt, exists among Europeans and savages alike. In the West of England, the labourers will tell you that the thunder-axes they dig up fell from the sky. In Brittany, says Mr. Tylor, the old man who mends umbrellas at Carnac, beside the mysterious stone avenues of that great French Stonehenge, inquires on his rounds for *pierres de tonnerre*, which of course are found with suspicious frequency in the immediate neighbourhood of prehistoric remains. In the Chinese Encyclopædia we are told that the 'lightning stones' have sometimes the shape of a hatchet, sometimes that of a knife, and sometimes that of a mallet. And then, by a curious misapprehension, the sapient author of that work goes on to observe that these lightning stones are used by the wandering Mongols instead of copper and steel. It never seems to have struck his celestial intelligence that the Mongols made the lightning stones instead of digging them up out of the earth. So deeply had the idea of the thunderbolt buried itself in the recesses of his soul, that though a neighbouring people were still actually manufacturing stone axes almost under his very eyes, he reversed mentally the entire process, and supposed they dug up the thunderbolts which he saw them using, and employed them as common hatchets. This is one of the finest instances on record of the popular figure which grammarians call the *hysteron proteron*, and ordinary folk describe as putting the

cart before the horse. Just so, while in some parts of Brazil the Indians are still laboriously polishing their stone hatchets, in other parts the planters are digging up the precisely similar stone hatchets of earlier generations, and religiously preserving them in their houses as undoubted thunderbolts. I have myself had pressed upon my attention as genuine lightning stones, in the West Indies, the exquisitely polished greenstone tomahawks of the old Carib marauders. But then, in this matter, I am pretty much in the position of that philosophic sceptic who, when he was asked by a lady whether he believed in ghosts, answered wisely, 'No, madam, I have seen by far too many of them.'

One of the finest accounts ever given of the nature of thunderbolts is that mentioned by Adrianus Tollius in his edition of 'Boethius on Gems.' He gives illustrations of some neolithic axes and hammers, and then proceeds to state that in the opinion of philosophers they are generated in the sky by a fulgurous exhalation (whatever that may look like) conglobed in a cloud by a circumfixed humour, and baked hard, as it were, by intense heat. The weapon, it seems, then becomes pointed by the damp mixed with it flying from the dry part, and leaving the other end denser; while the exhalations press it so hard that it breaks out through the cloud, and makes thunder and lightning. A very lucid explanation certainly, but rendered a little difficult of apprehension by the effort necessary for realising in a mental picture the conglobation of a fulgurous exhalation by a circumfixed humour.

One would like to see a drawing of the process, though the sketch would probably much resemble the picture of a muchness, so admirably described by the mock turtle. The excellent Tollius himself, however, while demurring on the whole to this hypothesis of the philosophers, bases his objection mainly on the ground that if this were so, then it is odd the thunderbolts are not round, but wedge-shaped, and that they have holes in them, and those holes not equal throughout, but widest at the ends. As a matter of fact, Tollius has here hit the right nail on the head quite accidentally; for the holes are really there, of course, to receive the haft of the axe or hammer. But if they were truly thunderbolts, and if the bolts were shafted, then the holes would have been lengthwise, as in an arrowhead, not crosswise, as in an axe or hammer. Which is a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of the philosophic opinion.

Some of the *ceraunia*, says Pliny, are like hatchets. He would have been nearer the mark if he had said 'are hatchets' outright. But this *aperçu*, which was to Pliny merely a stray suggestion, became to the northern peoples a firm article of belief, and caused them to represent to themselves their god Thor or Thunor as armed, not with a bolt, but with an axe or hammer. Etymologically Thor, Thunor, and thunder are the self-same word; but while the southern races looked upon Zeus or Indra as wielding his forked darts in his red right hand, the northern races looked upon the Thunder-god as hurling down an angry hammer from his seat in the clouds. There can be but little doubt that the very notion of Thor's hammer itself was derived from the shape of the supposed thunderbolt, which the Scandinavians and Teutons rightly saw at once to be an axe or mallet, not an arrow-head. The 'fiery axe' of Thunor is a common metaphor in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Thus, Thor's hammer is itself merely the picture which our northern ancestors formed to themselves, by compounding the idea of thunder and lightning with the idea of the polished stone hatchets they dug up among the fields and meadows.

Flint arrowheads of the stone age are less often taken for thunderbolts, no doubt because they are so much smaller that they look quite too insignificant for the weapons of an angry god. They are more frequently described as fairy-darts or fairy-bolts. Still, I have known even arrowheads regarded as thunderbolts and preserved superstitiously under that belief. In Finland, stone arrows are universally so viewed; and the rainbow is looked upon as the bow of Tiermes, the thunder-god, who shoots with it the guilty sorcerers.

But why should thunderbolts, whether stone axes or flint arrowheads, be preserved, not merely as curiosities, but from motives of superstition? The reason is a simple one. Everybody knows that in all magical ceremonies it is necessary to have something belonging to the person you wish to conjure against, in order to make your spells effectual. A bone, be it but a joint of the little finger, is sufficient to raise the ghost to which it once belonged; cuttings of hair or clippings of nails are enough to put their owner magically in your power; and that is the reason why, if you are a prudent person, you will always burn all such off-castings of your body, lest haply an enemy should get hold of them, and cast the evil eye upon you with their potent aid. In the same

way, if you can lay hands upon anything that once belonged to an elf, such as a fairy-bolt or flint arrowhead, you can get its former possessor to do anything you wish by simply rubbing it and calling upon him to appear. This is the secret of half the charms and amulets in existence, most of which are either real old arrowheads, or carnelians cut in the same shape, which has now mostly degenerated from the barb to the conventional heart, and been mistakenly associated with the idea of love. This is the secret, too, of all the rings, lamps, gems, and boxes, possession of which gives a man power over fairies, spirits, gnomes, and genii. All magic proceeds upon the prime belief that you must possess something belonging to the person you wish to control, constrain, or injure. And, failing anything else, you must at least have a wax image of him, which you call by his name, and use as his substitute in your incantations.

On this primitive principle, possession of a thunderbolt gives you some sort of hold, as it were, over the thunder-god himself in person. If you keep a thunderbolt in your house it will never be struck by lightning. In Shetland, stone axes are religiously preserved in every cottage as a cheap and simple substitute for lightning-rods. In Cornwall, the stone hatchets and arrowheads not only guard the house from thunder, but also act as magical barometers, changing colour with the changes of the weather, as if in sympathy with the temper of the thunder-god. In Germany, the house where a thunderbolt is kept is safe from the storm; and the bolt itself begins to sweat on the approach of lightning-clouds. Nay, so potent is the protection afforded by a thunderbolt that where the lightning has once struck it never strikes again; the bolt already buried in the soil seems to preserve the surrounding place from the anger of the deity. Old and pagan in their nature as are these beliefs, they yet survive so thoroughly into Christian times that I have seen a stone hatchet built into the steeple of a church to protect it from lightning. Indeed, steeples have always of course attracted the electric discharge to a singular degree by their height and tapering form, especially before the introduction of lightning-rods; and it was a sore trial of faith to mediæval reasoners to understand why heaven should hurl its angry darts so often against the towers of its very own churches. In the Abruzzi the flint axe has actually been Christianised into St. Paul's arrows—*saetti de San Paolo*. Families hand down the miraculous stones from father to son as a precious legacy; and mothers hang

them on their children's necks side by side with medals of saints and madonnas, which themselves are hardly so highly prized as the stones that fall from heaven.

Another and very different form of thunderbolt is the belemnite, a common English fossil often preserved in houses in the west country with the same superstitious reverence as the neolithic hatchets. The very form of the belemnite at once suggests the notion of a dart or lance-head, which has gained for it its scientific name. At the present day, when all our girls go to Girton and enter for the classical tripos, I need hardly translate the word belemnite 'for the benefit of the ladies,' as people used to do in the dark and unemancipated eighteenth century; but as our boys have left off learning Greek just as their sisters are beginning to act the 'Antigone' at private theatricals, I may perhaps be pardoned if I explain, 'for the benefit of the gentlemen,' that the word is practically equivalent to javelin-fossil. The belemnites are the internal shells of a sort of cuttle-fish which swam about in enormous numbers in the seas whose sediment forms our modern lias, oolite, and gault. A great many different species are known and have acquired charming names in very doubtful Attic at the hands of profoundly learned geological investigators, but almost all are equally good representatives of the mythical thunderbolt. The finest specimens are long, thick, cylindrical, and gradually tapering, with a hole at one end as if on purpose to receive the shaft. Sometimes they have petrified into iron pyrites or copper compounds, shining like gold, and then they make very noble thunderbolts indeed, heavy as lead, and capable of doing profound mischief if properly directed. At other times they have crystallised in transparent spar, and then they form very beautiful objects, as smooth and polished as the best lapidary could possibly make them. Belemnites are generally found in immense numbers together, especially in the marlstone quarries of the Midlands, and in the lias cliffs of Dorsetshire. Yet the quarrymen who find them never seem to have their faith shaken in the least by the enormous quantities of thunderbolts that would appear to have struck a single spot with such extraordinary frequency. This little fact also tells rather hardly against the theory that the lightning never falls twice upon the same place.

Only the largest and heaviest belemnites are known as thunder stones; the smaller ones are more commonly described as agate pencils. In Shakespeare's country their connection with thunder



is well known, so that in all probability a belemnite is the original of the beautiful lines in 'Cymbeline':—

Fear no more the lightning flash,  
Nor the all-dreaded thunder stone,

where the distinction between the lightning and the thunderbolt is particularly well indicated. In every part of Europe belemnites and stone hatchets are alike regarded as thunderbolts; so that we have the curious result that people confuse under a single name a natural fossil of immense antiquity and a human product of comparatively recent but still prehistoric date. Indeed, I have had two thunderbolts shown me at once, one of which was a large belemnite and the other a modern Indian tomahawk. Curiously enough, English sailors still call the nearest surviving relatives of the belemnites, the squids or calamaries of the Atlantic, by the appropriate name of sea-arrows.

Many other natural or artificial objects have added their tittle to the belief in thunderbolts. In the Himalayas, for example, where awful thunderstorms are always occurring as common objects of the country, the torrents which follow them tear out of the loose soil fossil bones and tusks and teeth, which are universally looked upon as lightning-stones. The nodules of pyrites, often picked up on beaches, with their false appearance of having been melted by intense heat, pass muster easily with children and sailor folk for the genuine thunderbolts. But the grand upholder of the belief, the one true undeniable reality which has kept alive the thunderbolt even in a wicked and sceptical age, is beyond all question the occasional falling of meteoric stones. Your meteor is an incontrovertible fact; there is no getting over him; in the British Museum itself you will find him duly classified and labelled and catalogued. Here, surely, we have the ultimate substratum of the thunderbolt myth. To be sure, meteors have no kind of natural connection with thunderstorms; they may fall anywhere and at any time; but to object thus is to be hypercritical. A stone that falls from heaven, no matter how or when, is quite good enough to be considered as a thunderbolt.

Meteors, indeed, might very easily be confounded with lightning, especially by people who already have the full-blown conception of a thunderbolt floating about vaguely in their brains. The meteor leaps upon the earth suddenly with a rushing noise; it is usually red-hot when it falls, by friction against the air; it is mostly composed of native iron and other heavy metallic bodies;

and it does its best to bury itself in the ground in the most orthodox and respectable manner. The man who sees this parlous monster come whizzing through the clouds from planetary space, making a fiery track like a great dragon as it moves rapidly across the sky, and finally ploughing its way into the earth in his own back garden, may well be excused for regarding it as a fine specimen of the true antique thunderbolt. The same virtues which belong to the buried stone are in some other places claimed for meteoric iron, small pieces of which are worn as charms, specially useful in protecting the wearer against thunder, lightning, and evil incantations. In many cases miraculous images have been hewn out of the stones that have fallen from heaven; and in others the meteorite itself is carefully preserved or worshipped as the actual representative of god or goddess, saint or madonna. The image that fell down from Jupiter may itself have been a mass of meteoric iron.

Both meteorites and stone hatchets, as well as all other forms of thunderbolt, are in excellent repute as amulets, not only against lightning, but against the evil eye generally. In Italy they protect the owner from thunder, epidemics, and cattle disease, the last two of which are well known to be caused by witchcraft; while Prospero in the 'Tempest' is a surviving proof how thunderstorms, too, can be magically produced. The tongues of sheep-bells ought to be made of meteoric iron or of elf-bolts, in order to insure the animals against foot-and-mouth disease or death by storm. Built into walls or placed on the threshold of stables, thunderbolts are capital preventives of fire or other damage, though not perhaps in this respect quite equal to a rusty horseshoe from a prehistoric battle-field. Thrown into a well they purify the water; and boiled in the drink of diseased sheep they render a cure positively certain. In Cornwall thunderbolts are a sovereign remedy for rheumatism; and in the popular pharmacopœia of Ireland they have been employed with success for ophthalmia, pleurisy, and many other painful diseases. If finely powdered and swallowed piecemeal, they render the person who swallows them invulnerable for the rest of his lifetime. But they cannot conscientiously be recommended for dyspepsia and other forms of indigestion.

As if on purpose to confuse our already very vague ideas about thunderbolts, there is one special kind of lightning which really seems intentionally to simulate a meteorite, and that is the kind known as fireballs or (more scientifically) globular lightning. A

fireball generally appears as a sphere of light, sometimes only as big as a Dutch cheese, sometimes as large as three feet in diameter. It moves along very slowly and demurely through the air, remaining visible for a whole minute or two together; and in the end it generally bursts up with great violence, as if it were a London railway station being experimented upon by Irish patriots. At Milan one day a fireball of this description walked down one of the streets so slowly that a small crowd walked after it admiringly, to see where it was going. It made straight for a church steeple, after the common but sacrilegious fashion of all lightning, struck the gilded cross on the topmost pinnacle, and then immediately vanished, like a Virgilian apparition, into thin air.

A few years ago, too, Dr. Tripe was watching a very severe thunderstorm, when he saw a fire-ball come quietly gliding up to him, apparently rising from the earth rather than falling towards it. Instead of running away, like a practical man, the intrepid doctor held his ground quietly and observed the fiery monster with scientific nonchalance. After continuing its course for some time in a peaceful and regular fashion, however, without attempting to assault him, it finally darted off at a tangent in another direction, and turned apparently into forked lightning. A fireball, noticed among the Glendowan Mountains in Donegal, behaved even more eccentrically, as might be expected from its Irish antecedents. It first skirted the earth in a leisurely way for several hundred yards like a cannon-ball; then it struck the ground, ricocheted, and once more bounded along for another short spell; after which it disappeared in the boggy soil, as if it were completely finished and done for. But in another moment it rose again, nothing daunted, with Celtic irrepressibility, several yards away, pursued its ghostly course across a running stream (which shows, at least, there could have been no witchcraft in it), and finally ran to earth for good in the opposite bank, leaving a round hole in the sloping peat at the spot where it buried itself. Where it first struck, it cut up the peat as if with a knife, and made a broad deep trench which remained afterwards as a witness of its eccentric conduct. If the person who observed it had been of a superstitious turn of mind, we should have had here one of the finest and most terrifying ghost stories on the entire record, which would have made an exceptionally splendid show in the Transactions of the Society for Psychical Research. Unfortunately, however, he was only a man of science, ungifted with the precious dower of poetical imagination;

so he stupidly called it a remarkable fireball, measured the ground carefully like a common engineer, and sent an account of the phenomenon to that far more prosaic periodical, the 'Quarterly Journal of the Meteorological Society.' Another splendid apparition thrown away recklessly, for ever!

There is a curious form of electrical discharge, somewhat similar to the fireball but on a smaller scale, which may be regarded as the exact opposite of the thunderbolt, inasmuch as it is always quite harmless. This is St. Elmo's fire, a brush of lambent light, which plays around the masts of ships and the tops of trees, when clouds are low and tension great. It is, in fact, the equivalent in nature of the brush discharge from an electric machine. The Greeks and Romans looked upon this lambent display as a sign of the presence of Castor and Pollux, '*fratres Helenæ, lucida sidera,*' and held that its appearance was an omen of safety, as everybody who has read the '*Lays of Ancient Rome*' must surely remember. The modern name, St. Elmo's fire, is itself a curiously twisted and perversely Christianized reminiscence of the great twin brethren; for St. Elmo is merely a corruption of Helena, made masculine and canonised by the grateful sailors. It was as Helen's brothers that they best knew the Dioscuri in the good old days of the upper empire; and when the new religion forbade them any longer to worship those vain heathen deities, they managed to hand over the flames at the masthead to an imaginary St. Elmo, whose protection stood them in just as good stead as that of the original alternate immortals.

Finally, the effects of lightning itself are sometimes such as to produce upon the mind of an impartial but unscientific beholder the firm idea that a bodily thunderbolt must necessarily have descended from heaven. In sand or rock, where lightning has struck, it often forms long hollow tubes, known to the calmly discriminating geological intelligence as fulgurites, and looking for all the world like gigantic drills such as quarrymen make for putting in a blast. They are produced, of course, by the melting of the rock under the terrific heat of the electric spark; and they grow narrower and narrower as they descend till they finally disappear. But to a casual observer, they irresistibly suggest the notion that a material weapon has struck the ground, and buried itself at the bottom of the hole. The summit of Little Ararat, that weather-beaten and many-fabled peak (where an enterprising journalist not long ago discovered the remains of Noah's Ark), has

been riddled through and through by frequent lightnings, till the rock is now a mere honeycombed mass of drills and tubes, like an old target at the end of a long day's constant rifle practice. Pieces of the red trachyte from the summit, a foot long, have been brought to Europe, perforated all over with these natural bullet marks, each of them lined with black glass, due to the fusion of the rock by the passage of the spark. Specimens of such thunder-drilled rock may be seen in most geological museums. On some which Humboldt collected from a peak in Mexico, the fused slag from the wall of the tube has overflowed on to the surrounding surface, thus conclusively proving (if proof were necessary) that the holes are due to melting heat alone, and not to the passage of any solid thunderbolt.

But it was the introduction and general employment of lightning-rods that dealt a final deathblow to the thunderbolt theory. A lightning-conductor consists essentially of a long piece of metal, pointed at the end, whose business it is, not so much (as most people imagine) to carry off the flash of lightning harmlessly, should it happen to strike the house to which the conductor is attached, but rather to prevent the occurrence of a flash at all, by gradually and gently drawing off the electricity as fast as it gathers, before it has had time to collect in sufficient force for a destructive discharge. It resembles in effect an overflow pipe, which drains off the surplus water of a pond as soon as it runs in, in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of an inundation, which might occur if the water were allowed to collect in force behind a dam or embankment. It is a flood-gate, not a moat: it carries away the electricity of the air quietly to the ground, without allowing it to gather in sufficient amount to produce a flash of lightning. It might thus be better called a lightning-preventor than a lightning-conductor: it conducts electricity, but it prevents lightning. At first, all lightning-rods used to be made with knobs on the top, and then the electricity used to collect at the surface until the electric force was sufficient to cause a spark. In those happy days, you had the pleasure of seeing that the lightning was actually being drawn off from your neighbourhood piecemeal. Knobs, it was held, must be the best things, because you could incontestably see the sparks striking them with your own eyes. But as time went on, electricians discovered that if you fixed a fine metal point to the conductor of an electric machine it was impossible to get up any appreciable charge, because the electricity

kept always leaking out by means of the point. Then it was seen that if you made your lightning-rods pointed at the end, you would be able in the same way to dissipate your electricity before it ever had time to come to a head in the shape of lightning. From that moment the thunderbolt was safely dead and buried. It was urged, indeed, that the attempt thus to rob Heaven of its thunders was wicked and impious; but the common-sense of mankind refused to believe that absolute omnipotence could be sensibly defied by twenty yards of cylindrical iron tubing. Thenceforth the thunderbolt ceased to exist, save in poetry, country houses, and the most rural circles; even the electric fluid was generally relegated to the provincial press, where it still keeps company harmoniously with caloric, the devouring element, nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, and many other like philosophical fossils: while lightning itself, shorn of its former glories, could no longer wage impious war against cathedral towers, but was compelled to restrict itself to blasting a solitary rider now and again in the open fields, or drilling more holes in the already crumbling summit of Mount Ararat. Yet it will be a thousand years more, in all probability, before the last thunderbolt ceases to be shown as a curiosity here and there to marvelling visitors, and takes its proper place in some village museum as a belemnite, a meteoric stone, or a polished axe head of our neolithic ancestors. Even then, no doubt, the original bolt will still survive as a recognised property in the stock-in-trade of every well-equipped poet.

## THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

BY JAMES PAYN.

AUTHOR OF 'BY PROXY' ETC. ETC.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

'WHATEVER HAPPENS, I SHALL LOVE YOU, WILLIE.'



IT was not till his visitors had gone that their host seemed to become fully conscious of the gravity of their errand. While the mind is clouded with doubt it is impossible for it to entertain any emotion very acutely, but now that the accusation of the literary lawyer had been shown to be groundless, Mr. Erin became at once alive to its great wickedness and impertinence.

'The man must have been mad—stark, staring mad!' he exclaimed, 'to have come here, and upon the ground of that trumpery deed of his to have made such abominable imputations! I know that Malone is burning to see my manuscripts, though he has not the honesty to confess it,

and I should not wonder if he had sent that fellow here as a spy.'

'Nay, I am sure Mr. Wallis was no spy,' said Margaret.

'Well, at all events, instead of reporting "All is barren," as was hoped,' continued the antiquary, 'he will have to speak of "milk and honey." Upon my life, I believe I could have got



him to sign our confession of faith if I had only pressed it; for by nature, however warped by evil communications, he struck me as an honest man.'

'Not only honest, but kind, uncle,' observed Margaret gently.

'He was very civil to *you*, I noticed,' returned her uncle grimly. 'I am sure you could have got him to sign. What a thorn it would have been in that scoundrel's side if one of his lieutenants could have been seduced so far from his allegiance.'

When Mr. Erin said 'that scoundrel' he always meant Malone. It was not necessary for him—as in the case of the gentleman who had married three times, and was wont to observe, 'When I say "my wife" I mean my first wife'—to explain whom he meant.

'I don't blame Mr. Wallis at all,' said Margaret. 'He came upon a disagreeable errand, in the interests of truth, and has frankly acknowledged himself to be in the wrong. The person I do feel indignant against is that horrid Mr. Talbot.'

'“The man of letters,” as he called himself,' remarked Mr. Erin contemptuously. 'He never even asked to look at the manuscripts: I don't believe he can read. What do you think of your young friend now?' he inquired, turning to William Henry.

'Well, sir, I think he has made a fool of himself, and knows it.'

'You are much too good-natured, Willie,' observed Margaret indignantly. 'I am sure, Frank, you agree with me that Mr. Talbot's conduct has been most treacherous and malignant.'

Dennis had not opened his lips since William Henry's return; he had watched for it with at least as much anxiety as the rest, but the refutation of what had been alleged seemed to have given him rather relief than satisfaction. He was too good a fellow to wish any disgrace to happen even to a rival; but (as Margaret read his behaviour) he could hardly exult in that rival's victory, which could but result in Mr. Erin's having greater confidence in the young fellow than ever, and consequently in the bettering of his chance of gaining his cousin's hand.

'Yes,' said Dennis quietly, 'William Henry has made the great mistake of allowing an Irishman of low type to be on familiar terms with him. The men of that nation, when they are of sterling nature, are among the best, as they are undoubtedly among the most agreeable, men in the world; but there are a great many counterfeits—men who, like Talbot, under the

mask of *bonhomie*, conceal a morose and malignant disposition ; they belong, in fact, to the same class of their fellow-countrymen who shoot men from behind a hedge.'

'Quite true,' observed Mr. Erin approvingly. 'I have never heard that type of man—to which Malone, for one, belongs—so graphically described.'

'I do hope, Willie, you will have nothing more to do with him,' said Margaret, earnestly.

'You may depend upon it he will have nothing more to do with *me*,' answered the young fellow, laughing. 'He already knows what I thought of his verses ; indeed, it was my telling him my honest opinion of them which has so set him against me ; and now he knows what I think of himself.'

'Well said, my lad,' said the antiquary, rubbing his hands and smiling with the consciousness of triumph. 'One need not fear any malice when we are conscious of no ill-doing on our own part. My good Dennis, you look so exceedingly glum that, if one didn't know you, one would think that you had not that cause for confidence.'

'As regards what we were just talking of, that Irish gentleman,' observed Dennis, sententiously, 'I have no confidence in him at all. There is always reason to fear a man who carries a knife under his waistcoat.'

'Pooh, pooh, Dennis ! you take such sombre views of everything.'

'At all events,' put in Margaret, gently, 'Frank is not alarmed upon his own account.'

'Gad ! that's true,' observed the antiquary, drily : 'he takes care to let us know that these matters are no concern of his. If all these wonderful discoveries that have been vouchsafed to us these last few months should turn out to be so much wastepaper, I don't think he would sleep a wink the worse for it.'

Dennis coloured to his temples, but said nothing. Perhaps he was conscious of shortcoming in Shakespearean enthusiasm, or was aware that he had not shown much exultation over the recent rout of the enemy. Margaret thought he might have said a word or two in self-defence ; but what she deemed to be the cause of his silence—namely, that the whole subject of the discoveries was distasteful to him, as being associated, as it certainly was, with William Henry's success in another matter—was also an excuse for him, and she pitied him with all her heart.

To have defended him in his presence to Mr. Erin would, she felt, have been a cruel kindness, since it might have suggested a feeling more tender than pity ; but a certain remorse—it was almost an act of penance—compelled her to speak of the matter afterwards to William Henry.

‘My uncle is very hard upon poor Frank,’ she said, ‘about these manuscripts. I am sure that anything that concerns us concerns him, but he cannot be expected to feel exactly as we do in the matter.’

‘No, I suppose not,’ said William Henry.

‘Well, of course not. It is his way to take things more philosophically than other people. I am sure he looked pleased enough when you confuted Mr. Wallis.’

‘Pleased, but surprised,’ returned the other, drily.

‘Oh, Willie, that is ungenerous of you!’

‘I am only stating a fact. His face did not, I admit, exhibit disappointment, but it expressed extreme astonishment. I don’t think as Mr. Erin does about these things, but I think a man should stick to his friends, especially in the presence of those by whom their honesty is called in question. Mr. Wallis noticed it, I promise you.’

‘There was surely no harm in Frank looking astonished, even if he did,’ said Margaret ; then in a more tender tone, as though she had done enough for friendship, she added, ‘I confess, however, I was not looking at him. I was looking at *you*, Willie. How marvellously you kept command of yourself, even when things seemed to be at the worst. Now confess, dear, did you not really know that you would find that document, or something like it, when you went off to the Temple?’

‘What makes you say that?’ he inquired quickly.

‘Well, only because I seemed to read it in your face. Oh, Willie, you don’t know what I went through while you were away. For though, as you often say, it is no affair of yours whether the manuscripts are genuine or not, yet——’ She hesitated ; she evidently found it difficult to put her thought into words.

‘You mean that the question is one that, after all, seriously affects us,’ he put in gently.

‘Well, yes, because you and I are one. Perhaps it was the presence of that scheming Mr. Talbot which made you look so, but the matter seemed somehow to affect you personally. Your own honour appeared to be almost called in question.’

He shook his head, but she went on—

‘And that is why your parting look, though you didn’t look at me, Willie, gave me courage to face them. I felt that you would come back to clear yourself, and to triumph over them. Of course I did not know how it would be effected, but I had faith—or perhaps,’ added the girl, dropping her voice, ‘it was love.’

‘Yes, it was love,’ said the young man, fondling her hand in his own and speaking in the same low tones while he gazed thoughtfully before him. ‘Love is better than faith, for it endures. What we no longer believe in we despise, but what we have once loved we love always.’

There was silence between them for a little—the lovers’ silence, which is more golden far than that of which philosophy speaks; then he addressed her with a lighter air.

‘And were you really pleased,’ he said, ‘when I brought the deed back and made that old curmudgeon look so foolish?’

‘Nay, he was no curmudgeon, Willie, and I felt as much for him as I could afford to feel; but your bringing such good news was delightful. It showed that what others prize so highly, such as this man Hemyng’s signature, was for you quite a commonplace possession. It almost seemed that you have only to hold up your finger and beckon to her, as it were, and Good Luck comes to you.’

‘Then the good luck I have had, and the estimation in which it has caused me to be held by others, makes you happy, Margaret?’

‘Of course, it makes me proud and pleased,’ she answered earnestly. ‘How can it be otherwise when you are “the talk of the town”? But what gives me the greatest pleasure of all is to see that it has not spoilt you, Willie; that you take it all so quietly and prudently, which shows that you deserve these gifts of Fortune.’

‘She has more in store for me yet,’ he answered confidently; ‘I feel it—I am sure of it, Maggie!’

‘But, my dear Willie, are you not talked about enough already, and you but a lad of seventeen? You must be a glutton, a very glutton, for fame.’

‘I am,’ he answered vehemently, ‘for fame, but not for notoriety only. I wish to be thought well of on my own account—not as the mere channel of another’s thoughts. I have stuff within me which the world shall sooner or later recognise—I swear it!’

Margaret looked at him with amazement. She had hitherto had no great opinion of his talents, as we know ; but now either his enthusiasm carried her away with it, or, what was more probable, the atmosphere of love which surrounded him made him appear larger than of old. In her mind's eye she already beheld him a second Dryden, that monarch of letters of which she had so often heard her uncle speak.

'But you will always be the same to me, Willie?' she murmured timidly.

Her humility, perhaps, touched him, for at her words he became strangely agitated, and his face grew pale to the very lips.

'Nay,' he said, 'I must ask *that* of *you*. Whatever happens, will you never cease to love me?'

'Whatever happens, Willie,' she answered softly, 'I shall love you more and more.'

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### ANOTHER DISCOVERY.



WHEN folks are not in accord, and especially if there is fear on one side, communication of all kinds is difficult enough, but personal companionship is well-nigh unendurable. Often and often in evenings not so long ago William Henry had hesitated to come in on his father's very doorstep, and turned away into the wet and wind-swept streets, rather than thrust his unwelcome companionship upon him. Not seldom, in the days between the death of his wife and Margaret's coming to Norfolk Street, Mr. Erin had left the supper table without a word, and sought his own chamber an hour before his time, rather than endure the sight of the boy whose very existence was a reproach to him, who had had the ill taste to survive his own beloved child, and who had not a pleasure or pursuit in common with him. Now, however, all this was changed ; and nothing was more significant of the alteration in the old man's feelings towards William Henry than the satisfaction he took in his society. So close an attachment the young man might well have dispensed with, since it kept him sometimes from his Margaret ; but he nevertheless was far from discouraging it, since he knew that such familiarity tended in the end to ensure her to him.

It was the antiquary's whim—or perhaps he thought that association of ideas might help to incline the young man's

heart towards him—to read at night Shakespeare's plays with him, as they had been wont to do when William Henry was yet a child and no coldness had as yet sprung up between them. At times the young fellow's attention would flag a little; his thoughts would fly after his heart, which was upstairs in Margaret's keeping; but as a rule he shared, or seemed to share, the old man's enthusiasm. His comments and suggestions on the text were always received with a respect which, considering what would have been their fate had they been hazarded six months ago, was almost ludicrous. Such illogical changes in personal estimation are not unexampled; even in modern times there have been instances where the sudden acquisition of wealth, or the unexpected succession to a title, have invested their astonished possessors with attributes in no way connected with either rank or riches; in the present case the admiration expressed was, however, remarkable, because the very qualities of literary judgment and the like, which were now acknowledged, had been of old contemptuously ignored. William Henry, who had never himself ignored them, was content to find them recognised at last by whatever means, and exchanged his views upon the character of Hamlet with the antiquary with cheerful confidence and upon equal terms.

One night they were reading 'Lear' together, and had come to those lines wherein the Duke offers Kent half the administration of the kingdom. To this Kent replies—

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go:  
My master calls me; I must not say 'No.'

'Do you not think, sir,' observed William Henry, 'that such a couplet is somewhat inappropriate to the occasion?'

'How so?' inquired the antiquary. It was noteworthy that he took the objection with such mildness. The notion of anything in Shakespeare being inappropriate was like suggesting to a fire-worshipper that there were spots on the sun.

'Well, sir, it strikes me as somewhat too brief and trivial, considering the subject on which he speaks. Now what do you think of this by way of an emendation?' He drew from his pocket a slip of paper on which the following lines were written in his own handwriting:—

Thanks, sir; but I go to that unknown land  
That chains each pilgrim fast within its soil,

By living men most shunned, most dreaded.  
 Still my good master this same journey took :  
 He calls me ; I am content and straight obey.  
 Then farewell, world ; the busy scene is done :  
 Kent lived most true ; Kent died most like a man.

The antiquary's face was a study. A few months ago it is doubtful whether anything from William Henry's pen would have obtained so much as patient consideration. Of his son's genius Mr. Erin had always thought very little ; he esteemed him indeed no more worthy of the title of man of letters than his friend Mr. Talbot himself ; but his productions were now on a very different plane. They demanded his best attention and such admiration as it was possible to give.

'Still my good master this same journey took :  
 He calls me ; I am content and straight obey,'

he murmured. 'That is harmonious and natural ; a certain simplicity pervades it : yes, my lad, that is creditable.'

'I venture to think,' said the young man deferentially, 'that the opening lines—

Thanks, sir ; but I go to that unknown land, &c.—

are not devoid of merit.'

'Devoid ? No, certainly not devoid. Courteous in expression and—um—to the point, but somewhat modern in tone.'

Without speaking, but with a smile full of significance, the young man produced a roll of paper and laid it before his companion.

'Great heavens ! what is this ?' exclaimed Mr. Erin, straightening out the manuscript with trembling fingers, while he devoured it with his eyes.

'It is something that you hoped to find at Stratford—at Clapton House,' returned William Henry, quietly. 'How often have you told me that some manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays must needs be in existence somewhere ! You were right ; this is the original, or at all events a very early manuscript, of "Lear."'

"Lear" ? Shakespeare's "Lear" ? My dear Samuel, you take my breath away. And yet the handwriting seems incontestable ; and here is the jug watermark, a clear proof at least of its antiquity. You have read it, of course : does it differ from the quartos ?'

'Yes, materially.'

'Thank Heaven !—I mean, how extraordinary ! One can



hardly, indeed, wish a line of Shakespeare's to differ from what is already engraven in our hearts; but still to get his first thoughts! Truly a rapturous day!

'I rather think, sir,' said William Henry, 'that after investigation you will acknowledge that these were not only his first thoughts but his best thoughts. There is a polish on the gem that has heretofore been lacking. The manuscript will, if I am not mistaken, prove Shakespeare to have been a more finished writer than has been hitherto imagined. There are many new readings, but once again to refer to that speech of Kent's: you admired it in its modern form, into which I purposely cast it, confident that its merits would not escape you even in that guise; but in its proper and antique dress just be so good as to reperuse it; perhaps you will give it voice, the advantage of a trained utterance.'

Thus advised, Mr. Erin, nothing loth, repeated the lines aloud—

Thanks, Sir; butte I goe toe thatte unknowne land  
That chaynes each Pilgrime faste within its soyle.

He read sonorously and with a somewhat pompous air, but effectively; the dignity of the subject sustained him; moreover, the sight of the old spelling and quaint calligraphy stirred him as the clang of the trumpet moves the war-horse to exhibit his best paces.

'It is certainly very fine,' was his verdict upon his own performance. 'Who does not pronounce that speech replete with pathos and energy must resign all pretensions to poetical taste.'

'But as an emendation on the received version,' persisted William Henry—

'I have a journey, sir, shortly to go—

will you not admit that it compares favourably with *that*?'

'I consider it, my dear Samuel,' was the solemn reply, 'a decided improvement.'

He spoke in a tone of conviction, which admitted of no question; sudden as his conversion was (for in praising what in fact he had believed to be his son's composition he had gone to the extreme limit that his conscience would permit), it was perfectly genuine.

There are only a very few people in the world who form an independent judgment on anything upon its intrinsic merits. Most of us are the slaves of authority, or what is supposed to be

authority in matters of opinion. In letters men are almost as much victims to a name as in art. The scholar blind to the beauties of a modern poem can perceive them in an ancient one even where they do not exist. He cannot be persuaded that Æschylus was capable of writing a dull play; the antiquary prefers a *torso* of two thousand years old to a full-length figure by Canova. This may not be good sense, but it is human nature.

‘I need not ask you,’ continued Mr. Erin after a pause, during which he gazed at the manuscript like Cortez, on his peak, at the Pacific, ‘whether this precious document came from the same treasure house as the rest?’

‘Yes, sir; it almost seems as if there were no end to them. I have not yet explored half the curious papers on which my patron seems to set so little store.’

The antiquary’s eyes sparkled under his shaggy brows; if the young man had read his very heart he could not have replied to its secret thoughts more pertinently. An hour before he had hardly dreamt of the existence of such a prize, but, now that it had been found, it at once began to suggest the most magnificent possibilities. This was the first, but why should it be the last? If the manuscript of the ‘Lear’ had survived all the accidents of time and chance, why not that of the ‘Hamlet’ also—the ‘Hamlet,’ with its ambiguous utterances, so differently rendered by the Shakespearean oracles, and which stood so much in need of an authoritative exponent?

When a man (for no merit of his own beyond a little bribery at elections) is made a baronet, he is not so enraptured but that he beholds in the perspective a peerage, and even dreams that upon a somewhat ampler waistcoat (but still his own) may one day repose the broad riband of the Garter.

‘What is very remarkable in the present manuscript,’ continued William Henry, ‘is that it is free from that ribaldry which but too often disfigures the plays of Shakespeare.’

‘The taste of the time was somewhat coarse,’ observed Mr. Erin. It was almost incredible even to himself, but he felt that his tone was deprecatory: he was actually making apologies for the Bard of Avon to this young gentleman of seventeen.

‘Nevertheless I cannot believe that Shakespeare pandered to it,’ observed William Henry gravely. ‘These things are in my opinion introduced by the players of the period, and afterwards inserted in the stage copies of the plays from which they were

literally printed; and thus the ear of England has been abused. If the discovery of this manuscript should clear Shakespeare's memory from these ignoble stains, it will be a subject of national congratulation.'

'Very true,' assented Mr. Erin. He felt that the remark was insufficient, wanting in enthusiasm, and altogether upon a lower level than the other's arguments; but the fact was his mind was dwelling upon more personal considerations. He was reflecting upon his own high position as the proprietor of this unique treasure and on what Malone would say *now*.

These reflections, while they filled him with self-complacency, made him set a higher value upon William Henry than ever; for, like the magician in the Arabian story, he could do nothing without his Aladdheen to help him.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A TRUE LOVER.

If Mr. Erin imagined that what Malone would say *now*—i.e. after the discovery of the 'Lear' manuscript—must needs be in the way of apology and penitence, he was doomed to disappointment. So far from the circumstance carrying conviction to the soul of that commentator, and making him remorseful for his past transgressions, it seemed to incite him to the greater insolence, just as (so Mr. Erin expressed it) the discovery of a new rubric might have incited the Devil not only against it, but against the old ones. He reiterated all his old objections and fortified them with new ones; he refused to accept the testimony of the Hemyngs note of hand, which had satisfied his friend and ally Mr. Wallis; he repeated his horrid suggestions that the Shakespeare lock was a girl's ringlet, and, in a word, 'raged' like the heathen. Having declined to look at the 'Lear' upon the ground of 'life being too short for the examination of such trash,' he pronounced it to be 'plain and palpable forgery.' 'Three words,' he said, 'would suffice for the matter,' and published 'An Inquiry into Certain Papers Attributed to Shakespeare,' extending to four hundred pages quarto.

Whereto Mr. Erin responded at equal length with 'a studious avoidance of the personality which Mr. Malone had imported into the controversy,' but at the same time taking the liberty to observe that in acting his various parts on the stage of life Fortune had

denied that gentleman every quality essential to each, inasmuch as he was a critic without taste, a poet without imagination, a scholar without learning, a wit without humour, an antiquary without the least knowledge of antiquity, and a man of gallantry, in his dotage. This was a very pretty quarrel as it stood; but, far from being confined to two antagonists, it was taken up by scores on each side: it was no longer 'a gentle passage of arms,' as the combat *à outrance* used to be euphoniously called, but a *mêlée*. Only the ancient rules of a fair fight were utterly disregarded; both parties went at it hammer and tongs, and hit one another anywhere and with anything. One would have almost imagined that instead of a disagreement amongst scholars it had been a theological controversy.

To the statement that no one who was not a fool or a knave believed in the Shakespearean manuscripts, Mr. Samuel Erin, scorning to make any particular rejoinder, replied by simply publishing a list of those who had appended their names to his certificate. To this he added a footnote stating the opinion which Dr. Parr had expressed concerning the Confession—namely, that there were many beautiful things in the liturgy of the Church of England, but all inferior to it, which produced a vehement disavowal from that hot-tempered cleric; he mentioned that he had never stated anything so foolish, and that the words in question had been used by Dr. Wharton, an observation which caused some coolness between the two learned divines.

To say that William Henry, the football between these two opposing parties, enjoyed it, would be an exaggeration; he liked being in the air—and indeed he was lauded by many persons to the very skies—but did not so much relish the being knocked and trodden under foot below.

As a popular poet once remarked of the reviewers, 'I like their eulogies well enough, but d—n their criticisms,' so the young man would have preferred his notoriety to have been without this alloy; but on the whole it pleased him vastly.

Margaret was almost angry with him for taking men's hard words so coolly, but comforted herself by reflecting that her Willie must have a heavenly temper.

'As for me,' she would say, 'I could scratch their eyes out. It drives me wild to listen to what uncle sometimes reads aloud out of their horrid pamphlets.'

To which the young fellow would gallantly reply, 'To have

such a partisan who would not compound for fifty such detractors? And, after all, these good people have a right to their own opinions, though it must be confessed they express them with some intemperance. I have given them the "Lear" manuscript, but I cannot give them the taste and poetic feeling necessary to appreciate it.'

What of course had wounded Margaret was not their antagonistic criticism, nor even their supercilious contempt, but the accusations they had not scrupled to make against William Henry's good faith. One does not talk of the 'poetic feeling' of a hostile jury. But love has as many causes of admiration as Burton in his 'Anatomy' finds for melancholy; and the young fellow's very carelessness about these charges was, in Margaret's eyes, a feather in his cap, and proved, for one thing, their absolute want of foundation. If she did not understand all the niceties of the points of difference between the 'Lear' manuscript and the 'Lear' as it was printed in her uncle's quarto edition of the play, it was not for want of instruction. There was little else talked of in Norfolk Street, which was perhaps one of the reasons which made the visits of Frank Dennis still more rare. It was clear that the whole subject of the Shakespearean discoveries was distasteful to him; and it must be confessed that he did not even affect that interest in them which good breeding, and indeed good nature, would have seemed to suggest. As to the comparative merits of the old and new readings, or rather, as Mr. Erin maintained, of the accepted and the original text, he had no opinion to offer one way or the other. 'I am no critic,' he would say; 'so that while my differing from you might give you some annoyance my agreement with you could afford you no satisfaction'—a remark that did not by any means content the antiquary.

When one's friends have no opinions of their own it cannot surely hurt them to adopt *our* opinions, and it is only reasonable that they should do so. It was quite a comfort (because not wholly looked for) to find that when pushed home on a subject within his own judgment Mr. Dennis's heart in these matters was at least in the right place. Thus, when referring one day to the onslaughts of his opponents, Mr. Erin instanced as an example of their microscopic depravity a certain objection that had been made to the Hemynges's note of hand. 'You know, of course, my good fellow, how it has been proved beyond all dispute that there were two John Hemynges.'

'I was here when Mr. Albany Wallis came and the other deed was found,' was the young man's reply.

'Tut! tut! why, that of course; but, dear me, how behind-hand you are. One would really have thought as an old friend, however little interest you take in these matters for their own sake, that you would have kept abreast with us so far. Why, this receipt here has been found since then, with a memorandum in the bard's own hand, "*Receipt forre moneyes givenne me bye the talle Hemynges onne accounte o' the Curtain Theatre.*"'

'I did not happen to have heard of it,' said Dennis, regarding the new-found treasure, if not with indifference, certainly with some lack of rapture.

'Well, now you see it,' continued Mr. Erin with irritation. 'Of course it disposes of all doubt in that direction. But now, forsooth, the note of hand is objected to upon the ground of its seals.'

'Good heavens!' ejaculated Dennis, and this time it was evident that he was really moved.

'No wonder you are indignant. I now remember that I drew your particular attention to the document in question. Well, it is almost incredible that their accusation has shrunk to the puny charge that a note of hand, even in Shakespeare's time, would not have had seals appended to it. Is it not amazing that human nature can stoop to such detraction? If it had been Malone—a mere reptile—who makes a point of the Globe being a theatre instead of a playhouse—but this is some lawyer, it seems, a child of the Devil, I'll warrant, like the rest of his craft.'

Considering that William Henry, now Mr. Erin's 'dear Samuel,' had been articulated to a conveyancer with the idea of becoming a lawyer himself when full grown, this was a somewhat sweeping as well as severe remark; but, carried away by the torrent of his wrath, the speaker was wholly unconscious of this little inconsistency.

'As if every one did not know,' he continued—'not to mention the fact that in Malone's own prolegomena the Curtain Theatre is so called in Stackwood's sermon, A.D. 1578—that in the Elizabethan times every one not only spelt as he liked, and differently at different times, but appended seals to their documents, or did without them, as opportunity served. Is it not even probable that Hemynges, being a player and knowing little of business, may have been particularly solicitous of every form of law being observed, however superfluous, and in even so small a matter? Is

it not in accordance, I ask, with what we know of human nature that it should be so?’

It was clear that this was no extempore speech, nor even a discourse the claims of which could be satisfied by pen and ink, but one very evidently intended to be printed. Its deliverance gave Frank Dennis time to recover from a certain dismay into which Mr. Erin’s communication had thrown him.

‘Just so,’ he said; ‘you are right, no doubt. The objection as to its being contrary to custom to append seals seems frivolous enough.’

‘And the ground has been cut away from the first, you see, in all other directions,’ exclaimed the antiquary triumphantly. ‘Margaret,’ he continued in high good humour, as his niece entered the room, ‘permit me to introduce to you a convert. Mr. Frank Dennis has been hitherto little better than a sceptic, but the light of truth is beginning to dawn upon him through crannies. He has been moved to confess that the note of hand at least is genuine. I have a letter to write before the post goes out, so will leave him in your hands to continue the work of conversion.’

The door closed behind him before Frank Dennis, always slow of speech, could form his reply; but he gave Margaret the benefit of it.

‘I never told your uncle,’ he said in a grave, pained voice, ‘that I believed the note of hand to be genuine.’

‘What *does* it matter?’ exclaimed Margaret, reproachfully. ‘I cannot tell you how these miserable disagreements distress me; of themselves, indeed, they are of no consequence, but they irritate my uncle, and have a still worse effect, Frank, upon you. I can ascribe it to no other cause, indeed, that you have almost entirely ceased to visit us.’

This was not quite true; moreover, it was a dangerous assertion to make, likely to draw upon her the very reproach she had always feared, and which she felt was not undeserved. She trembled lest he should reply, ‘No, that was not the reason; it is because you have preferred William Henry’s love to mine.’

It was to her relief, therefore, though also to her great surprise, that he answered in his habitual quiet tone, ‘Perhaps it is, Margaret.’

She did not believe it was, and was convinced that in saying so he had laid a burthen upon his conscience for her sake. His nature, she well knew, was so honest and simple that it shrank from even an evasion of the truth, and the very fact of his having



thus evaded it to spare her showed her the depth of his affection. If he, then, still loved her, was it not cruel, she reflected, to ask him to her home to witness her happiness with another? She would miss his company, for that was always pleasant to her as that of a tender and faithful friend; but was it not selfish of her to invite it? It was obvious that he came unwillingly, and only in obedience to her behest. If she ceased to importune him he would certainly cease to come, but she would not lose his friendship. When—that is, if—Willie and she were married, it would be different with him; he would then come and see them as the friend of both.

‘Of course it’s very unfortunate,’ she stammered, with her eyes fixed on the ground, ‘but since my uncle is so thin-skinned about these manuscripts, and you, as he says, are so dreadfully sceptical, it would perhaps be better—until the whole affair has subsided—’

She looked up for a moment in her embarrassment of speech and met Frank’s face; it was gazing at her with an expression of pain and pity and patience which she did not understand and which increased her perplexity.

‘Yes, Margaret, you are right,’ he said: ‘I am better away from here for the present. My coming can do no good, and, as you have surmised, it gives me pain.’

At this the blood rushed to her cheeks, but he went on in the same quiet, resolute tone, as though he had made no reference to his love for her at all.

‘When one cannot say what one will, even when nature dictates it, it is clear that one is in a false position. I shall not come to Norfolk Street any more.’

‘But you are not going away—I mean from your home?’ exclaimed the girl, alarmed by an expression in his face which seemed to forebode some worse thing than his words implied.

‘No, Margaret; I shall be at home, where a word from you will find me at your service always—*always*.’

He spoke with such a tender stress upon the word that she felt a great remorse for what she had done to him, though indeed it had been no fault of hers. It is impossible, under the present conditions of society at least, that a young woman should make two young men happy at once: one of them must go to the wall. Perhaps if this one had put himself forward instead of the other matters might have been otherwise; the peach falls to the hand

that is readiest. There are men that never win the woman they love till she becomes a widow ; for my part, in the meantime—but I am writing of Frank Dennis. He was of a patient disposition,



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and had a very moderate opinion of himself. And yet his love for Margaret was great, and so genuine that he could have been content to see her happy with another man. Why he was not now content was because he did not think she would be happy, but he did not tell her so, for, though honesty might suggest his doing so, honour forbade him. There is an

honour quite different from that of the fanfaronnading sort, one which has nothing to do with running a fellow-creature through

for a hasty word, or with ruining some one else to pay our card debts—a delicate, scrupulous sense of what is becoming even in our relations with our enemies, a flower of a modest colour which grows in the shade. This was the sort of honour that Frank Dennis possessed, and which prompted him now to keep silence, when he might have said something which would have been much to his own advantage.

‘Good-bye, Margaret,’ was all he said, as he took her hand in his. He would, if he could, have even eliminated a certain tenderness from his tone, because he knew it gave her pain; but he could not so utterly conquer nature.

‘Good-bye, Frank,’ was all she said in reply, or dared to say.

She was thinking of him and not of herself at all. It was pity for him which made her voice falter and her soul quail within her, lest at that supreme moment he should have demanded from her, once for all, another sort of dismissal.

As to love, her heart was loyal to her Willie; and yet, though she would not have confessed it even to herself, she had a secret sense as the door closed upon this other one that she had burned her boats.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### A TIFF.

WHEN one is not *en rapport* with one's friends about any particular subject, in which for the time they are interested, it is better to leave them, for it is certain they would rather have our room than our company. If you happen to be at Bullock Smithy, for example, during a contested election, when your host at the Hall and all his family are looking forward to the regeneration of the species—conditional upon the return of Mr. Brown—and you don't much care about it yourself (or even doubt of its being accomplished that way), you had better for the present leave the Hall and revisit it under less exciting circumstances. They will politely lament your departure, but privately be very glad to get rid of you. You may be (you *are*) a charming person, but just now you are a little in the way. They resent your presence as spirit-rappers resent that of ‘the sceptic,’ as they call every one endowed with reason and common-sense. The common harmony is disturbed by it as by a false note.

Thus it happened that the withdrawal of Frank Dennis from his friends in Norfolk Street was upon the whole a relief to them. They could talk unreservedly among themselves of the subject that lay next their hearts, and which was really assuming great importance for all of them.

If the mere amount of the Shakespearean manuscripts could have assured, as it undoubtedly made more probable, their authenticity, the voice of detraction ought to have been silenced; for there was some new discovery made in that wonderful treasure chamber of the Temple almost every day. Contracts and mortgages, theatrical disbursements, miscellaneous letters, deeds of gift, all immediately relating to Shakespeare, if not in his very hand, were constantly being found. Records which a few months ago would have filled Mr. Erin's heart with rapture were now, indeed, welcomed by him, but almost as a matter of course. 'The gentleman of considerable property in the Temple,' as the antiquary had been wont to vaguely term him, had now grown as familiar to him as though he had had a name as well as a local habitation.

'Well, what news from our friend to-day, Samuel?' was the cheery question he would address to his son on his return home every evening, and it was very seldom that there was no news.

Mr. Erin indeed had cause to be grateful to this unknown person, since he had (though not without reluctance) given permission for the publication of the papers, which had accordingly been advertised to appear in a handsome quarto at two guineas. They included all the documents, the 'Lear' (of which unfortunately three leaves were missing) and a few pages of 'Hamlet.' These last differed but little from those of the accepted text, a circumstance which did not escape the notice of the enemy, who did not hesitate to aver that the forger, whoever he was, had found 'Hamlet' too difficult a nut to crack.

The best reply, as Mr. Erin wisely concluded, to so coarse a sarcasm was the publication of Shakespeare's Deed of Trust, conveying the 'Lear' to John Hemyng, in which he said, 'Should this bee everre agayne Impryntedd. I doe order tyhatt itte bee so down from this mye true written Playe, and nott from those now prynted'—an injunction which, had there been an entire copy extant, would doubtless have included the 'Hamlet' also.

To the 'Miscellaneous papers and legal instruments, under the hand and seal of William Shakespeare, including the tragedy of

"King Lear" and a small fragment of "Hamlet," was prefixed a preface by Mr. Erin himself, setting forth the circumstances under which they had come into his possession, challenging criticism and defying inquiry. This publication was of course the crucial test. While our opinions are expressed *viva voce*, or even with pen and ink, they are of little consequence to the world at large, however much they may affect our little circle of friends and enemies. I know many persons who might have remained in possession of great works of genius in manuscript had they not been so indiscreet as to print them; the annalist's sarcasm of *nisi imperasset* applies to authors as well as kings.

The book evoked a storm of censure. 'My eyes will scarcely permit me to read it,' wrote Malone ('posturing as a sick lion,' sneered Mr. Erin), 'but I have read enough to convince me that the whole production is a forgery.' Others fell foul of the style, the ideas, the very punctuation of the discovered manuscripts. They acknowledged that the phraseology was simple, but added that 'it was that sort of simplicity that belongs to the fool.' As it was some time before the advocates of the discovery could get out their rejoinders—with which many of those who had signed the certificate were busy—Mr. Samuel Erin had for the present a pretty time of it. He was like a man caught in a downpour of hailstones without an umbrella. He never blenched, however, for a single instant; one would have thought that waterproofs and overalls had been invented before his time for his especial behalf. But poor Margaret trembled and shivered. How could people be so wicked as to say such things of Willie! She would not have been so distressed had she not seen that he shrank from these stings himself. Womanlike, she concealed her own pain and strove to comfort him.

'As for these imputations upon your honour, Willie, they are not worth thinking of; it is as though they called you a negro, when every one who has ever seen you knows you to be a white man. Still less need you trouble yourself about their criticisms; for what can it matter to you whether the manuscript, or the printed copy, of Shakespeare's works has the greater worth?'

'That's true,' assented the young fellow; but by his knitted brows and downcast looks she knew that it did matter to him nevertheless.

'This is what I have always feared for you, should you publish a book of your own,' she went on earnestly. 'You are so

sensitive, darling. How thankful I am that Shakespeare (who can afford to smile at it) is bearing the brunt of all this, and not you !'

Then came the 'rejoinders,' like sunshine after storm. 'There was not an ingenuous character or disinterested individual in the whole circle of literature,' wrote one enthusiastic partisan, 'to whom the manuscripts had been subjected who was not convinced of their authenticity.' They had 'not only convinced the scholar and the antiquary, but the papermaker.' As to the secrecy observed with respect to their origin and possessor, 'what becomes of the acumen of the critic if such details are necessary to establish the genuineness of such a production? His occupation is gone.' As to the intrinsic merits of the 'Lear,' the seal of Shakespeare's genius was stamped upon it. 'A wit so pregnant, an imagination so unbounded, a knowledge so intuitive of the weakness of the human heart, as was here exhibited could belong to no other man. If it was not his, it was inspiration itself.'

'Here, indeed,' thought William Henry, 'is something like criticism. This is an independent opinion with which the carping of prejudice or personal malevolence is not to be mentioned in the same breath.'

And, indeed, if these eulogies had been the products of the best minds in the most perfect state of equilibrium they could scarcely have given him a more exquisite gratification. He had a sensation about his forehead as though a wreath of laurels rested there, or even a halo. He touched the stars with his head, and if he moved upon the earth at all it was on wings. It was delightful to Margaret to see him thus. She hardly recognised in him, exultant and self-conscious, the same young fellow whom she had known depressed and obscure. She was proud beyond measure of the position he had made for himself in the world of letters, but happier still because it seemed to make him hers, to put her uncle's consent to their union beyond all question. Yet, as love's fashion is, she still pictured to herself at times delays, opposition, and even obstacles.

'We must not be too sure, my darling,' she said to him lovingly one day, 'though all things seem to smile on us. It is but the promise after all, the bud but not the flower, the blossom but not the fruit.'

'True,' he answered thoughtfully; 'all this is but a mock engagement; the battle has yet to come. It is something, how-

ever, that the fighting will be on the same field; one at least knows the ground.'

She stared at him, in doubt as to what he meant; then, as if alarmed by her wondering looks, he stammered out, 'I was thinking of Mr. Erin; we now know him thoroughly, or rather he has become another man from what he was.'

'My uncle has changed, no doubt, and for the better,' she said.

'There is change everywhere and for the better,' he answered, smiling.

He took from his pocket one of the printed cards which were now formally issued to purchasers of the lately published volume for leave to examine the manuscripts.

SHAKESPEARE.

Adm't Albany Wallis, a subscriber, to view the papers.

'Think of Mr. Wallis having bought the book! Malone and he have quarrelled about it, it seems.'

'Not about the book,' put in Margaret quietly; 'I am afraid he is not even yet a true believer, but I like him better for having bought the book than even if he were. He felt he had behaved badly to us when he came here with that wretched Mr. Talbot, and his purchase of it was by way of making some amends. Where he differed from Mr. Malone was about the John Hemyngde deed you brought from the Temple; Mr. Malone has had the malevolence to stigmatise even that as a forgery; but, as Mr. Wallis points out, since you were away from Norfolk Street only three-quarters of an hour, such a fraud was impossible and out of the question. He is a just man with a mind open to conviction, and he has the courage to confess himself in the wrong.'

'Whoever told you all this?' inquired William Henry in amazement.

'A person who is no friend of his, but, like him, has a generous nature.'

'Methinks you do protest too much,' observed the young man drily. 'No one was saying anything against your informant, who it was easy to perceive was Mr. Frank Dennis. I thought he had literally withdrawn his countenance from us of late, as he has done long ago in another sense.'



'No one can control his own opinions, Willie,' said Margaret gently. 'I have heard you yourself say a hundred times concerning this very matter that every one had a right to them, but, since the very knowledge of Frank's entertaining certain views (though he never expressed them except upon compulsion) was an annoyance to my uncle, he thought it better to absent himself.'

'But still you meet him elsewhere?'

'I met him in the street the other day by accident. He gave me, it is true, the information I have just given to you, but he did not volunteer it. It was I who spoke to him first about Mr. Wallis.'

'It seems he took great care to undeceive you as to that gentleman's having any belief in me.'

'In *you*, Willie? We never even spoke of *you*.'

This was very true: he had become a subject to which, for Frank's sake, she never alluded in Frank's presence.

'Well, of course I am not responsible for the manuscripts; but do you suppose that Dennis was thinking of them, for which he does not care one farthing, even if he was talking of them? He was thinking of *me*. When he depreciates them to you he depreciates me; when he quotes the opinion of Mr. Wallis or of any one else he is quoting it against me. You need not blush, Margaret, as if my mind had just awakened to a suspicion of the truth. Do you suppose I don't know what Mr. Frank Dennis has been after, all along?'

'I will not pretend to be ignorant of what you mean, Willie,' said Margaret firmly, 'but you are quite mistaken if you imagine that Frank Dennis has ever breathed a word to me, or, as I believe, to any one, to your disadvantage: he has a loyal heart and is a true friend.'

'A friend, indeed!' said William Henry scornfully.

'Yes, indeed and in need. I will lay my life on it, Willie. A man who detests all falsehood and deceit, and even if he entertained an unworthy thought of a rival would hold his peace about him.'

'That is why, no doubt, he did not speak of me,' put in the young man bitterly. 'Detraction can be conveyed by silence as well as by a forked tongue.'

'You are both unjust and unkind, Willie.'

'Still the fact remains that, whenever you see this gentleman, I do not rise—I will not say by comparison, because I believe

you love me—but I do not rise in your opinion. You cannot deny it; your face confesses it. Under these circumstances you can hardly think me unreasonable if I ask you for the present not to meet Mr. Frank Dennis, even “by accident in the street.”

‘I will not speak to him, Willie, if you object to it,’ said Margaret in a low voice. She was the more distressed at what he had said because she had a secret consciousness that it was not undeserved. He did not indeed sink in her opinion after her talks with Frank, and certainly did not suffer by contrast; but, on the other hand, he did not rise, while her confidence in the genuineness of the Shakespearean documents did sink.

Thence arose misgivings as to the future, doubts whether Willie would be permitted to win her, and a certain unsteadiness, not indeed of purpose, but of outlook.

‘Of course you must speak to him if you meet him, Maggie,’ continued William Henry in a tone from which all irritation had disappeared; ‘only for the present do not seek his society. You will not long have to deny yourself the pleasure, since in a few weeks—that is, I intend very shortly to ask Mr. Erin to give you to me for my very own.’

‘Oh, Willie! He will never do it,’ she returned, not however with much conviction, but as one who toys with doubt. ‘I am sure he does not dream of your having such an intention.’

‘Then he must be as blind as Gloster, Maggie.’

This allusion to the ‘Lear’ was somehow—it would have been difficult to say why—unwelcome to her. Love no doubt depends upon very small and comparatively mundane matters, but still that her hopes of marriage with her lover should hang upon the general belief in the genuineness of an old manuscript seemed a little humiliating. She would have far preferred, had it been possible, that William Henry should have won his way to a modest competence by his own pen. Perhaps he had hopes of this, and some surprise in store for her; or why should he have used that phrase, ‘in a few weeks’? It was true that he had substituted for it a more vague expression, but she could not help thinking that he had some definite plan in his mind to precipitate events. What *could* it be?

## CHAPTER XXII.

## A BARGAIN.

‘THE book goes bravely, Samuel,’ observed Mr. Erin, as father and son were sitting together one evening with Margaret between them. William Henry’s hand was resting on the back of her chair, and at times he addressed her in tones so low that his words must needs have had no more meaning for a third person than if they had been in a foreign tongue. Yet both his contiguity and his confidences remained unreprieved. Perhaps among other recently developed virtues in the young man it was put down by Mr. Erin (who himself had a quick eye for the main chance) to William Henry’s credit that he never questioned his father’s right to treat the Shakespearean papers as his own, or to demand any account of his stewardship with respect to them.

The antiquary, however, had scruples of his own, which, if they did not compel him to part with hard money, induced him to look upon his milch cow with very lenient and indulgent eyes.

It was surely only natural that these two young people should entertain a very strong mutual attachment; through long familiarity they doubtless seemed more like brother and sister to one another than cousins. It could not be said, in short, that Mr. Erin winked at their love-making, but he shut his eyes to it. It would have been very inconvenient to have said ‘No’ to a certain question, and quite impossible to say ‘Yes.’ It was better that things should take their own-course, even if it was a little dangerous, than to make matters uncomfortable by interference.

‘From first to last, my lad,’ he continued in a cheerful voice, ‘we shall make little short of 500*l.*, I expect.’

‘Indeed,’ said William Henry indifferently. To do him justice he cared little for money at any time, and just now less than usual. His appetite, even for fame, had for the present lost its keenness. Love possessed him only; he cared only for Margaret.

‘To think that a new reading of an old play—though to be sure it is Shakespeare’s play—should produce so much!’ went on Mr. Erin complacently. ‘Good heavens! what would not the public give for a new play by the immortal bard?’

‘The question is,’ observed William Henry, ‘what would *you* give, Mr. Erin?’

The remark was so unexpected, and delivered in such a quiet

tone, that for a moment the antiquary was dumbfounded, and between disbelief and expectancy made no reply.

‘My dear Samuel,’ he murmured presently, ‘is it possible you can be serious, that you have in your possession——’

‘Nay, sir,’ interrupted the young man smiling; ‘I never said that. I do not possess it, but within the last few days I have known of the existence of such a manuscript.’

‘You have known and not told me!’ exclaimed the antiquary reproachfully; ‘why, I might have died in the meantime!’

‘Then you would have seen Shakespeare, and he would have told you all about it,’ returned William Henry lightly.

‘Do not answer your father like that,’ said Margaret in low, reproving tones.

It was plain indeed that Mr. Erin was greatly agitated. His eyes were fixed upon his son, but without speculation in them. He looked like one in a trance to whom has been vouchsafed some wondrous vision.

‘I know what is best,’ returned the young man under his breath, pressing Margaret’s shoulder with his hand. His arm still hung over her chair; his manner was studiously unmoved, as becomes the master of a situation.

‘Where is it?’ gasped the old man.

‘In the Temple. I have not yet obtained permission to bring it away. Until I could do that I felt it was useless to speak about the matter—that I should only be discredited. Even you yourself, unless you saw the manuscript, might hesitate to believe in its authenticity.’

‘The manuscript?’ exclaimed Mr. Erin, his mind too monopolised by the splendour of the discovery to descend to detail; ‘you have really seen it, then, with your own eyes? An unacted play of Shakespeare’s!’

‘An unpublished one, at all events. I have certainly seen it, and within these two hours, but only in my patron’s presence.’

‘He said that whatever you found was to be yours,’ exclaimed Mr. Erin petulantly.

‘Well, up to this time he has been as good as his word,’ said William Henry smiling.

‘Indeed he has,’ remarked Margaret. ‘We must not be ungrateful, uncle.’

‘Nevertheless people should perform what they promise,’ observed the antiquary severely.

For the second time Margaret felt a gentle pressure upon her shoulder; it seemed as though Willie had whispered, 'You hear that.'

'The play is called "Vortigern and Rowena,"' continued the young man.

'An admirable subject,' murmured the antiquary ecstatically.

'It is, of course, historical; there are Hengist and Horsus.'

'Horsa,' suggested Mr. Erin.

'Shakespeare writes it Horsus; Horsa was perhaps his sister.'

'Perhaps,' admitted the antiquary with prompt adhesion. 'And the treatment? How does it rank as regards his other productions?'

'Nay, sir, that is for you to judge; I am no critic.'

'But you tell me that your patron will not part with it.'

'I have not yet persuaded him to do so; but I by no means despair of it, and in the meantime I have a copy of it.'

'My dear Samuel!'

'At first I tried to commit it to memory, but found the task beyond my powers. It is a very long play.'

'The longer the better,' murmured the antiquary.

'But not when one has to get it by heart,' observed William Henry drily. His tone and manner were more in contrast to those of the elder man than ever; as one grew heated the other seemed to grow cooler and cooler. There was no question as to which of them, just at present, was likely to prove the better hand at a bargain.

'But why do you talk thus, Samuel? The play, the play's the thing; since you have it why do you not produce it? You cannot imagine that delay—indeed, that anything—can enhance the interest I feel in this most marvellous of our discoveries.'

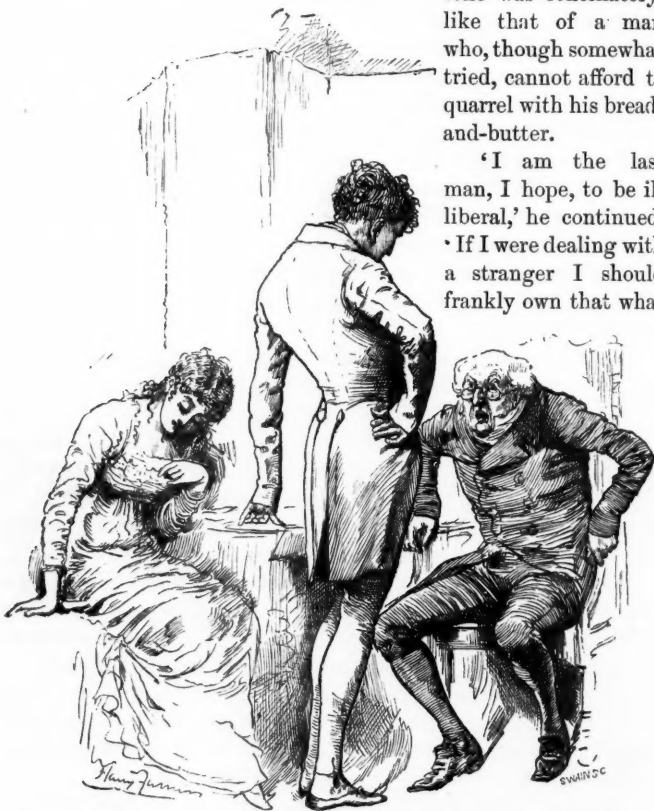
William Henry's face grew very grave.

'It is true that whatever is mine is yours, in a sense,' he said; 'but still you must pardon me for remarking that they are *my* discoveries.'

Margaret started in her chair; if she had not felt William Henry's grasp upon her wrist—for he had shifted his position and was confronting the antiquary face to face—she would have risen from it. She had never given her cousin credit for such self-assertion, and she trembled for its result. She did not even yet suspect it had a motive in which she herself was concerned; but the situation alarmed her. It was like that of some audacious clerk who demands of his master a partnership, with a certain difference that made it even graver.

'What is it you want?' inquired the antiquary. He too had become conscious that the relations between William Henry and himself were about to enter on a new phase; nevertheless his tone was conciliatory, like that of a man who, though somewhat tried, cannot afford to quarrel with his bread-and-butter.

'I am the last man, I hope, to be il-liberal,' he continued. 'If I were dealing with a stranger I should frankly own that what



you have, or rather hope to have, to dispose of is a valuable commodity; to me, indeed, as you know, it is more valuable than to any mere dealer in such wares. Nevertheless I hope you will be reasonable; after all it is a question of what the thing will fetch. I suppose you will not ask a fancy price?'

William Henry smiled. 'Well, some people might think it so, Mr. Erin, but it is not money at all that I require of you.'

‘Not money?’ echoed the antiquary in a voice of great relief. ‘Well, that indeed shows a proper spirit. I am really pleased to find that we are to have no haggling over a matter of this kind, which in truth would be little short of a sacrilege. If you have fixed your mind upon any of my poor possessions, though it should even be the “Decameron,” the earliest edition extant, and complete except for the title-page—’

‘It is not the “Decameron,” sir.’

‘Or the quarto of 1623, with marginal notes in my own hand. But no; that is a small matter indeed by comparison with this magnificent discovery. I hardly know what I have which would in any way appear to you an equivalent; but be assured that anything at my disposal is very much at your service.’

‘Then if you please, sir, I will take Margaret.’

‘Margaret!’ Mr. Erin repeated the name in tones of such supreme amazement as could not have been exceeded had the young man stipulated for his wig. Perhaps his surprise was a little simulated, which was certainly not the case with Margaret herself; she sat in silence, covered with blushes, and with her eyes fixed on the table before her, very much frightened, but by no means ‘hurt.’ While she trembled at Willie’s audacity she admired it.

Mr. Erin shot a glance at her which convinced him that he would get no help from that quarter. If she had not been cognisant of the young fellow’s intention it was clear that the proposal he had made was not displeasing to her. The antiquary ransacked his mind for an objection that would meet the case; there were plenty of them there, but none of them fit for use and at the same time strong enough. A very powerful one at once occurred to him in the question, ‘What do you propose to live upon?’ but unhappily the answer was equally obvious, ‘Upon *you*!’ A most intolerable suggestion, but one which—on the brink of a bargain—it was not convenient to combat.

For a moment, too, the objection of consanguinity occurred to him, that they were cousins; an admirable plea, because it was quite insurmountable; but though this might have had its weight with Margaret, he doubted of its efficacy in William Henry’s case, inasmuch as he probably knew that they were *not* cousins. To have this question raised in the young lady’s presence—or indeed at all—was not to be thought of. In the end he had to content himself with the commonplace argument



of immaturity, unsatisfactory at the best, since it only delays the evil day.

‘Margaret? You surely cannot be serious, my dear lad. Why, your united ages scarcely make up that of a marriageable man. This is really too ridiculous. You are not eighteen.’

The rejoinder that that was an objection which time could be relied on to remove was obvious, but William Henry did not make it. He was not only playing for a great stake; it was necessary that it should be paid in ready money.

‘I venture to think, Mr. Erin,’ he said respectfully, ‘that our case is somewhat exceptional. We have known one another for a long time, and very intimately; it is not a question of calf love. Moreover, to be frank with you, my value in your eyes is now at its highest. You may learn to esteem me more; I trust you may; but as time goes on I cannot hope commercially to be at such a premium. Now or never, therefore, is my time to sell.’

Though he spoke of himself as the article of barter he was well aware that Mr. Erin’s thoughts were fixed upon another purchase, which, as it were, included him in the same ‘lot.’

‘But, my dear Samuel, this is so altogether unexpected.’

‘So is the discovery of the manuscript,’ put in the young fellow with pitiless logic.

‘It is like springing a mine on me, my lad.’

‘The “Vortigern and Rowena” is also a mine, or I hope will prove so,’ was the quick rejoinder.

Whatever might be urged against William Henry Erin, it could not be said that he had not his wits about him.

‘You have only the copy,’ objected the antiquary, though he felt the argument to be inadequate, since it was liable to be swept away.

‘Nay,’ returned the young man, smiling, ‘what becomes of the acumen of the critic, if internal evidence is insufficient to establish authenticity? His occupation is gone.’

This was Mr. Erin’s favourite quotation from the ‘Rejoinder;’ to use it against him was like seething a kid in its mother’s milk, and it roused him for the first time to vigorous opposition. It is possible that he also saw his opportunity for spurring the other on to gain possession of the precious document.

‘That is all mighty fine, young sir, but this is not a question of sentiment. I must see this play in Shakespeare’s own handwriting before I can take your most unlooked-for proposal into

consideration at all. At present the whole affair is in the air.'

'You shall see the play,' said William Henry composedly.

'Moreover,' continued the antiquary with equal firmness, 'it will not be sufficient that I myself should be convinced of its authenticity. It must receive general acceptance.'

'I can hardly promise, sir, that there will be no objectors,' returned the young man drily; 'Mr. Malone, for example, will probably have something to say.'

The mention of 'that devil,' as the antiquary, in moments of irritation, was wont to call that respectable commentator, was most successful.

'I speak of rational beings, sir,' returned Mr. Erin, with quite what is called in painting his 'early manner.' 'What Malone may take into his head to think is absolutely indifferent to me. I speak of the public voice.'

'As heard, for instance, at the National Theatre,' suggested William Henry earnestly. 'Suppose that "Vortigern and Rowena" should be acted at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, and be received as the *bona fide* production of Shakespeare? Would that test content you?'

That such an ordeal would be of a sufficiently crucial nature was indubitable, yet not more so than the confidence with which it was proposed. If the least glimmer of doubt as to the genuineness of the Shakespearean MSS. still reigned in the antiquary's mind the voice and manner of his son as he spoke those words would have dispelled it. The immaturity of the two young people was not much altered for the better since Mr. Erin had cited it as a bar to their union, but, under the circumstances suggested, their position would be very materially improved. A play at Drury Lane in those days meant money in pocket; a successful play was a small fortune and might even be a large one. He would have greatly preferred to have this precious MS., like the others, for nothing, but, after all, what was demanded of him was better than being asked to give hard cash for a pig in a poke. It was only a promise to pay upon conditions which would make the payment comparatively easy.

'If "Vortigern and Rowena" is successful,' continued William Henry with the quiet persistence of a carpenter who strikes the same nail on the head, 'it must be understood that I have permission to marry Margaret as soon as she pleases.'

Poor Mr. Erin looked appealingly at his niece. 'You will surely

not be so indelicate,' his glance seemed to say, 'as to wish to precipitate a matter of this kind?' But he looked in vain. She did not, it is true, say, 'I will though;' there was even a blush on her cheek, which might have seemed to flatter his expectations: but she kept silence, which in such a case it was impossible to construe otherwise than as consent.

Some old gentlemen would have hereupon felt themselves justified in saying that 'young women were not so forward in their time,' or 'that such conduct was in their experience unprecedented,' a reflection, to judge by the frequency with which it is indulged in under similar circumstances, that would seem to give some sort of consolation; but the antecedents of Mr. Samuel Erin were unhappily, as we have hinted, not of a sufficiently ascetic nature to enable him to use this solace.

'Perhaps you would like to read the play?' suggested William Henry.

'Very much,' replied the antiquary with eagerness.

'Just as you please, Mr. Erin. It is yours of course, upon the understanding, supposing it to realise expectation, that we have your consent to our marriage.'

'Very good,' replied the antiquary, without any eagerness at all, and in a tone which (had such a substitution been feasible) would have better suited with 'Very bad.'

*(To be continued)*



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